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An American Language, by Sir William A. Craigie, on page 614

# The Saturday Review of Literature

EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

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## The School of Cruelty

PROTEST has been made, especially in the West, against a statement in these columns some weeks ago that American writers of fiction seemed to hate their country. It is only the New York (and Chicago?) writers, say these protesters, who hate their America. The "regional" schools are not of this mind at all, and to these schools such eminent authors as Willa Cather, Booth Tarkington, Robert Frost, Mary Austin, and many others belong. It is urban life in America that makes the American hate his environment. Yes, but rural life on the New England hillside or the mid-Western grain field also and too often seems to be toxic to the American. Mary Austin loves the Southwest, and apparently Oklahoma and California are going to be better liked than Iowa and Kansas. But Los Angeles is already developing a literature of satiric hate, and the new books about the old South are by no means idyllic.

There is a sadist strain in American writing. This is not true for the whole of it, but it is true for a part of it, the urban part particularly, since even those who write cruelly of the farm write after the city has made them over. There is not merely dislike for environment, there is a vein of cruelty in American writing, in some of the strongest and most skilful writing being done here. The current term is "hardness," but this is no gay hardness, and certainly no stoical hardness. It is to be found in the "debunking" biographies of Washington and Lincoln—in Masters's just published "Lincoln," where the author wields his particular interpretations of too much neglected facts in Lincoln's life with the cruel satisfaction of a torturer. The stories of Hemingway are cruel stories and yet there are American critics who complain of the cushion of sentiment which makes his heroes and heroines pity themselves. In many less important novels sensation ruthlessly described is allowed to work its will upon the characters, as if they were hard flints to be ground meaninglessly by the harder wheel of chance, while the author sneers or laughs, as if this were his revenge upon an existence which was not to his liking.

The defence is realism, the excuse is novelty. Hardness has come into American life, and one must be hard to write about it. There is a new, and in its present phase, a not very lovable society which breeds its own literature as poverty breeds crime. If authors are cruel it is because life seems to have become more cruel also. But indeed the sadists in American literature seem often to think that no defence is necessary.

Violence in American life is better advertised than formerly, but the new cruelty is in the minds of the writers. They are cruel because they are unhappy, because they do not like the life they live in, and perhaps because they do not like themselves. The biographers have some justification for they are trying to right a balance which had swung too far toward sentimental veneration. But the cruel novelists are weak men and women incapable of either irony or tragedy. They see the hard flashes from a life grown too materialistic and are dazzled as a walker in New York is dazzled by the metallic glints on the façades of new skyscrapers. He rubs his eyes angrily and so do they. Life is like that, they say, and of course life has always been like that, and like a good many other things too. But authors are hounds that hunt in packs. Let the malicious give cry first, and they will all be after. And indeed there is something trivial in most of this cruel writing, as of angry drivers scraping a passing running board with a curse.

Unfortunately they are skilful, more skilful than many a better adjusted writer who sees more truly but more dully, and this is especially true in the new generation now coming on. Having no ideas as to what humanity might, or ought to be, these sadists cannot penetrate beneath the surface glitter to see what it is. They are capable of shrewd realism, but of nothing else. They are cruel only because they are discontented and a little afraid. But they are clever, and they have the impudence which comes with the anonymity of a great city, and the assurance of its prestige with which to overthrow the spokesman for deeper lives. To tell the truth we are fed up with them. If those who see more in human nature, town or country, than its vices, cannot give us books as able as men and women spiritually their inferiors but more articulate are writing, we shall take to French or Japanese.

## *Presence of Snow*

By MELVILLE CANE

So rare, so mere,
You cannot hear
It brush against the stillness or impair
With faintest stir
The poised, suspended air.

So rare, so mere,
And yet imponderably clear,
You cannot see, yet see
The secret flow
Of imminent snow,
Although
The softest breath has yet to free,
The gentlest current yet to take,
The first bewildered flake.

## *This Week*

"Lincoln the Man."
Reviewed by CLAUDE BOWERS

"Flights from Chaos."
Reviewed by JOHN Q. STEWART.

"Ballads and Poems."
Reviewed by HOWARD MUMFORD JONES.

"Background with Figures."
Reviewed by FRANK JEWETT MATHER.

"A Night in Kurdistan."
Reviewed by CLINTON SIMPSON.

"Three Steeples."
Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT.

"Old New Orleans."
Reviewed by HERSCHEL BRICKELL.

John Mistletoe, XXVII.
By CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

"Essays on the Natural Origin of the Mind."
Reviewed by DICKINSON S. MILLER.

## *Next Week, or Later*

The Overproduction Terror.
By FABIAN FRANKLIN.

## Lincoln the Man*

By CLAUDE BOWERS
Author of "The Tragic Era"

WHEN Edgar Lee Masters was a small boy and thoroughly permeated with the Lincoln lore of the schools, he was shocked to learn that his grandfather, a man of fine character and high standing, had voted against Lincoln's election to the Senate in 1854. It puzzled him so much that he asked an explanation. The old man replied that he had not cared for Lincoln as a man, and had no confidence in him as a politician. Years later, Senator Beveridge, fresh from the triumph of his "Life of Marshall," began work on a biography of Lincoln, scarcely hoping to do more than recreate the figure of tradition a bit more scientifically than it had been done before. He soon found that the Lincoln he had conceived had never existed. As myth after myth went down before the cold light of historical research, there were times when he was almost persuaded to abandon the task. He doubted if the public wanted the truth. And all the while the heroic figure of Stephen A. Douglas loomed larger and larger, as patriot and statesman, as the biographer cleared away the miserable debris of malicious and partisan misrepresentations. It was an unhappy situation for the son of a soldier, brought up in the bitterly partisan atmosphere of reconstruction days. But he persevered, and when death stayed his hand, he had completed in two thoroughly documented and scholarly volumes the story of Lincoln through the debates of 1858. No other biography of Lincoln approaches this in authenticity, but the realism of it is evidently not appreciated, and as little as possible is being said about it.

* * *

Now comes Edgar Lee Masters to give us a definitely iconoclastic study of Lincoln, based largely upon the facts to be found in the works of Beveridge and Herndon. It is a dynamic and provocative book, brilliant but bitter, and it has already been savagely assailed. There are a few American leaders who are supposed to be sacred from frank analysis. It is a bit curious and amusing to note that all of these belong to one school of political thought. Until quite recently even Charles Sumner was sacrosanct. If a writer is moved to "belittle" he should by all means select Jefferson or Jackson for his subject, as so many are doing all the time. It would require a volume as fat as Mr. Masters's merely to enumerate the malicious fabrications against Jefferson to be found in "histories," and yet I do not recall that any "patriots" rise in protest against the maligning of the author of the Declaration whose principles Lincoln said "are the axioms and the definitions of a free society." It is agreed among the guardians of the temple that he and others of his school of thought are fair game, and one must not be shocked if the plebeans, unfamiliar with the rule, occasionally take liberties with others.

Now Mr. Masters is much abused because he accepts the facts revealed by Mr. Beveridge, who is much praised, but Mr. Masters is a Jeffersonian, and that *does* make a difference, doesn't it? It is true that Mr. Masters has challenged the myths more defiantly than the biographer.

The latter sets down the facts without comment, leaving it to the reader to draw his own conclusions; Mr. Masters sharply draws conclusions from the facts, and these frequently are uncomplimentary.

* LINCOLN THE MAN. By EDGAR LEE MASTERS. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. 1931. $5.

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That he writes at times with a touch of wrath, there can be no doubt. He is like the advocate in action, but this makes his story all the more fascinating and colorful. It marches to music with a few flags flying. When he encounters a palpable lie, invented for the blackguarding of Douglas, he loses all patience—which is one of the weaknesses of honesty.

It is perfectly legitimate to quarrel with the conclusions Mr. Masters draws from a fact, but it won't do, since the Beveridge biography, to pooh-pooh the facts temselves. It is notorious now that the American people have been given an entirely erroneous impression of the Lincoln of pre-presidential days. Thus he was not a hard working youth, and he escaped physical labor whenever possible. He was not suffering for years because his heart went out to the slaves. He did see a slave auction, but he did not say that if he ever got a chance to hit slavery he would "hit it and hit it hard." He was not shocked over the murder of Lovejoy. He had no use for the abolitionists. In the legislature, as Beveridge shows, he voted consistently against them. It was not until the Emancipation Proclamation that he gained their support—and that was a war, not a humanitarian, measure, frankly avowed as such. "If I can save the Union without freeing a single slave, I will do it," he wrote Greeley just a little while before.

And there are other myths of the pre-presidential days that have gone glimmering. Thus he did not refuse cases unless convinced that justice was with his client. He was not a retiring man with none of the tricks of the politician, but was, on the contrary, one of the most cunning manipulators in the history of American politics. Mr. Masters writes of a certain intellectual arrogance, but that is not *his* fact—that is Herndon's, and Herndon knew Lincoln as no other man. Nor was Lincoln a stranger to evasions and secret subterfuges in politics—as witness the sidestepping of the Codding resolutions, the incident of the secretly acquired German paper, his concealment of his attitude toward the Mexican war until his election to Congress, and his resulting unpopularity. All these are fully set forth by Beveridge, with proof, and they have not been challenged.

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Mr. Masters accepts these facts and draws an unfavorable portrait of the man from them. It is legitimate to quarrel with him on his conclusions, but he will be attacked upon the "facts" based on the personal knowledge of Herndon, and the scientifically accurate researches of Beveridge.

The author is too much the poet to question Lincoln's mastery of the art of expression. This was the study of his lifetime. Even as a boy in his 'teens he was writing verse and not doing a bad job either. It is a tribute to literature that his popular fame rests less upon what he did, aside from the Emancipation Proclamation, than upon what he said, and how he said it. Blot out his Gettysburg Address, the letter to the mother of martyred boys, and the Second Inaugural, and it would make an enormous difference in his historic stature.

But Masters insists that his deeds frequently contradicted his words. Thus, while following the Hamiltonian school in political action, he was professing devotion to the Jeffersonian philosophy. When he turned away from the Jacksonians in the bank fight to align himself with the moneyed aristocracy, he must have known that Nick Biddle was not fighting for "government of the people, by the people, and for the people."

More amazing to most, perhaps, is the author's insistence that Lincoln was not a lovable, but a cold man, not democratic but the opposite in his social intercourse. He cites the cold letter to his dying father as an illustration. This has always been a bit distressing to students of his life. And Masters is unable to conceive of him as a lovable man in view of his completely established secrecy and reticence. He quotes Justice David Davis, who thought him "the most secretive and reticent man" he had ever known. Both Beveridge and Herndon, who literally lived with him, found him cold. Masters tells us that "one may search all through the records of Lincoln without finding any passion in them." His letters to Mary Owens unquestionably are the coldest and most calculating love letters ever penned. Striking at the tradition that he "loved everyone" and that everyone hailed him as "Abe," Masters tells us that "he allowed no one to be familiar with him," that "no one slapped him on the back with a hearty hello," and that "always he was addressed as Mr. Lincoln." And this cold dignity the author ascribes to "an indifference of the heart."

One gathers from Masters's analysis that he believes Lincoln to have been a man of calculation. He finds that he had "some of the makings" of a fanatic, but that his sense of humor saved him; that, and the fact that "there was rooted in him vast conservative forces which stubbornly refused to yield to drastic innovation."

It is generally understood that he literally devoured newspapers, but was not much of a reader of books. Bearing on this point, the author calls the roll of noted books issuing from the press when Lincoln, in his prime, with abundance of time, might have been interested in them, but was not. Hallam's "Constitutional History of England," Grote, Macaulay, Darwin, Mills—all passed unnoticed, we are told. "He was not interested in the past, in the rise and fall of empires or democracies," is the conclusion.

Concerning his melancholia, Mr. Masters suggests several explanations. Beveridge had gone into this phase thoroughly and found three periods when Lincoln was clearly unbalanced—once, especially, when his friends hid razors and knives from him. But Beveridge offered no explanation; Masters suggests intestinal toxæmia, or the theory that he was "undersexed."

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This brings us to his relations with women, on which biographers have theorized extensively. His timidity among women is well established. Some have ascribed it to his realization of his awkwardness, others to the reason Masters suggests. Whatever the cause, the result is puzzling. There are indications that in his love contacts he advanced, and then retreated in something of a panic. No woman, perhaps, ever has had another such proposal as that of Lincoln to Mary Owens. No man is quite able to understand how such a letter could have been written. It was a forerunner of the precipitate flight from the marriage ceremony with Mary Todd, when Lincoln was found wandering aimlessly in the woods, talking incoherently. Only the story of Ann Rutledge has stood out as a bright spot to relieve the drabness of his love life, and in attacking the authenticity of this legend, the poet, who has written the most beautiful poem on the romance, has invited the laughter of the critics of his Lincoln study.

This, however, is hardly fair. The poem was written many years before Beveridge made an exhaustive investigation, was utterly unable to find any facts to sustain it, and concluded that if Lincoln was in love with Ann, she never was greatly interested in him. Mr. Masters has accepted Beveridge's conclusion. But this denial of the Ann Rutledge romance is not to Lincoln's discredit—it merely destroys a poetic story; the only effect is to leave Lincoln without a single profound love in his life, and the whole world loves a lover.

In the telling of his story, Masters has written some beautiful pages; on the politics of the period, many illuminating ones. At times, perhaps, he permits his resentment of the really foul treatment accorded Douglas by the historians to lead him to bitter comment. We find instances where we believe he draws a far-fetched conclusion, to Lincoln's discredit. He makes no secret of his distaste for Lincoln's character, or his contempt for the myths. But he has written an intensely interesting, arresting, challenging book which will create no end of bitter controversy, and have, in consequence, a wide reading.

* * *

To many who prefer realism to mythology in history, and have found it difficult to reconcile the Lincoln of pre-presidential days with the Lincoln of war times, the first part of the book will not seem in the least shocking. These have felt that under the emotional stress of the tragic struggle all that was fine and great in Lincoln came to the surface for the first time. But Mr. Masters will have none of that either. He finds nothing, or little, to commend in the presidential years, and here, we think, he makes a mistake and throws himself wide open to his enemies. He accepts the Summer-Wade-Stevens-Neeley conception of Lincoln as an incompetent executive, lacking in courage and decision. This is probably true of the first year. But the book would have been strengthened as a whole had Mr Masters conceded the sound common sense, the patience, the prescience of the President, his steadfastness of purpose in the last phase, his superiority to the party leaders who came to hate him because they could not bend him as they would. It was not for nothing that the Wade-Davis Manifesto was put out in denunciation of him; and had he lived his reconstruction policy, we think, would have been one of conciliation, and the earliest possible restoration of the States to their proper functions. Very few will be able to think of Lincoln as going along with the mad-dog policy of hate that cursed the country for a dozen years.

It is in the last chapter that we think we find the secret of Masters's impassioned attack. As a result of the Civil War, made inevitable by Lincoln's election, he finds that the democratic republic of Jefferson and the fathers was destroyed. Almost a century before, Hamilton, who "did not like our scheme of government in general," had said that there would "come a crisis in events" during which the government could be diverted from State rights and its democratic course. The crisis came in 1861. When it had passed in 1876, the old republic had ceased to be. Centralization had entered upon its own. State rights were dead. The ideals of Jefferson had been shunted aside, and the foundations had been laid for a plutocratic oligarchy.

This chapter is written under evident emotion and with tremendous force. If Lincoln was not partly responsible, and this is not clearly shown or charged, those by whom he had been elevated to power were. Under the stress of war, liberty always suffers. The Bill of Rights had no standing in the North during the struggle, and the damage might have been greater but for the patriotic courage of Chief Justice Taney in putting his court on record in protest. For this he was denounced and damned. Mr. Masters intimates that Lincoln was, toward the close, not a little concerned over the new forces he saw in action, but had he lived he hardly could have stopped the trend. The war had given them too much impetus. The twelve savage years of reconstruction, reeking with corruption and privilege, consolidated the power of money. It began, of course, under Lincoln, but is an Executive ever a free agent under the pressure of war? I doubt it. Certain it is that from Lincoln's time, democracy in America has been fighting a losing battle, and with his administration the old republic of Jefferson's dream ceased to be. If, as said, Lincoln saw the drift and feared for the liberties of his country, the tragedy of his life is here more than in his death. It is here because he professed faith in popular government and in the "principles of Jefferson" as the "axioms and definitions of a free society," and throughout his life, until he entered the White House, he had been aligned, unconsciously perhaps, with the forces that had struggled from the days of the Federalists to reduce those principles to impotency and to make a mockery of the "axioms and definitions."

# Galaxies and Super Galaxies

FLIGHTS FROM CHAOS. By HARLOW SHAPLEY. New York: Whittlesley House. 1930.

Reviewed by JOHN Q. STEWART
Princeton University

IN this book an inclusive classification of creatures is developed, from infinitesimal corpuscles to the infinite "space-time complex." The fall of man approaches the ultimate nadir with Dr. Shapley. The erstwhile monarch of creation is assigned scant space in "subclass beta of class zero"—among the colloidal aggregates.

In contrast to Sir James Jeans's epic, "The Universe around Us," "Flights from Chaos" may be characterized as an astronomical sonnet. Its appeal probably will be strongest to a smaller band of readers astronomically more sophisticated. Professional scientists, even, will profit by this succinct natural history of molecules, meteors, moons, stars, galaxies, and the "Cosmoplasma." But let not such ordinary folk as appreciate excellent sonnets be deterred.

By way of illustrations, small, ingenious sketches of astronomical subjects have been provided.

The important discussion of galaxies and supergalaxies presents for the general reader Dr. Shapley's new and revolutionary interpretations of these biggest things men see in space. (Women, too: mention is made of Miss Ames's collaboration in examining the Como-Virgo supergalaxy.) Out there, at one of science's frontiers, the reader is left by his cheerful and informative guide, with a strong intimation that still unknown, untamed phenomena are about.

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The monument in memory of Rupert Brooke, for which subscriptions have been received from all over the world, will be unveiled over his grave on the island of Skyros on April 5th.

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It is reported from Budapest that an old tramp, who was found dead on a road in Southern Bohemia, has been identified as Karl Hans Heine, a nephew of Heinrich Heine, the great German poet.

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# Poetry of Action

BALLADS AND POEMS: 1915-1930. By STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1931. $2.50.

Reviewed by HOWARD MUMFORD JONES

IN a world given to the poetry of thought and sensation, Stephen Vincent Benét has remained faithful to the poetry of action, the Scott of our time, whose "John Brown's Body" has been like "Marmion" an instant and well-deserved success. But if Benét has the narrative energy of Scott, his is a livelier and more dazzling world: one section of the present volume is called "The Kingdom of the Mad," which Scott would not have dreamed of; and if he has the exuberance, the vitality, the clean, clear boyish vigor of the great wizard, there is much more of a sense of escapade in the younger poet, who delights in turning the world upside down by the simple process of looking at it through his legs.

> Soup should be heralded with a mellow horn,

he writes, adding

> Over the salad let the woodwinds moan,

and so on through an ingenious sonnet which jumbles food and instrumentation together, only to conclude with a disillusioning crash:

> Such are my thoughts as—clang! crash! bang!—I brood
> And gorge the sticky mess these fools call food!

I do not cite these lines as great poetry, or even as good poetry, but as representing an important element in Benét's view of the world. For if Scott, to continue with the parallel, was mostly content with a world which produced noble creatures like Roderick Dhu and Fair Ellen, Benét, despite the charming group of poems addressed to Rosemary, is discontented with the world because it does not produce noble creatures like the unicorn and Helen of Troy. He writes with great truth:

> My mind's a map. A mad sea-captain drew it
> Under a flowing moon until he knew it;
> Winds with brass trumpets, puffy-cheeked as jugs.
> And states bright-patterned like Arabian rugs.
> "Here there be tygers." "Here we buried Jim."

Finding no such maps in a modern atlas, the poet has two resources: he creates in his narrative verse ("The Hemp," a tale of piracy, is an excellent example) a world in which such a map comes to life; or, as in the section of the present volume called "Skyscraper House," he seeks by an acute awareness of the present to translate its implied values back into such a world. For example, in a poem "Lunch-Time along Broadway," the New York crowds are pictured as a primeval beast which "snuffles his way," "pokes his muzzle," "roots into subterranean holes," and performs other actions eminently satisfactory to the amused and boyish imagination of the poet. For, in a highly flattering sense, Benét has the imagination of a boy; and Stevenson's "A Gossip on Romance" is an acute commentary on his poetry.

* * *

This sense of the irreconcilability of the world of romance and the world of the present explains, I think, why so many of the poems in the present collection open according to a formula. The formula is a brief sketch of a present situation; one element in that situation suggests something imaginative, unreal, or dramatic, which is the real poem; and the piece draws to a conclusion with a Heinesque return to the present—the dream is recognized as traumatic, and we return upon the workaday world with an increased sense of dissatisfaction. Those poems which most satisfactorily present the real world, it is significant, are poems of love and honor; and conversely, the most satisfactory narratives in the collection are those for which, as in "King David," there is no need of a springboard of present situation from which to leap into the past.

Mr. Benét's straight line narratives seem to me to be the most satisfactory parts of his collection. He tells a story swiftly, with a clean economy of line, and a right sense of dramatic, and melodramatic values. The two characteristic weaknesses in his narrative scarcely impede its flow, though they break the concentration of the reader. One is a restlessness which leads him to a constant change of verse pattern (seen most characteristically in the two "Helen" poems); and the other is an eager desire to make comparisons. In this volume everything is something else. I open at random and read:

> The wind sniffed like a happy cat
> At scuttling beetle-people,
> The sunshine would have roused a flat
> To try and be a steeple.

The first comparison is happy and unexceptionable; the second is unnecessary and uncouth. When in the next stanza the world becomes a coon that has climbed a branch, and the poet, Davy Crockett; and in the third Time is at first a miser and then a diamond-maker, one's attention is drawn away from the central unity of impression to admire the virtuosity of the poet.

Such writing springs from sheer exuberance, or seems to; and there is an infectious gayety even in Benét's macabre poems which is wholly charming. This, he seems to say, is what I can do in the worm-and-coffin line, and I think it's rather jolly. I do not say this to disparage the poet, for it is a quality wholly admirable in itself, especially when so many modernistic poets seem to write with such mental anguish that the pain is communicated to the reader; but it is a quality which perpetually prevents Benét from really reaching tragedy. His grim situations are dramatic, but they are not passionate; his pathos is genuine, but it is not profound. The most readable of poets, he inevitably suffers from his constant delight in the fun and pleasure of poetry. But it is a comment on modern verse that one feels apologetic about calling attention to the sunniness which radiates from this volume, as if the sun and the wind were weaknesses, and a pirate something to be ashamed of. Not only has Benét nothing to be ashamed of, it is a high tribute to his independence that he continues to prefer pirates.

EDGAR LEE MASTERS

# Retrospect and Comment

BACKGROUND WITH FIGURES. By CECILIA BEAUX. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1931. $5.

Reviewed by FRANK JEWETT MATHER

THERE is a singular and quite unanalyzable charm about this autobiography. Miss Beaux has the gift of the just word arising from the opportune sentiment. Reminiscence is illumined by penetrating comment—the wisdom of age blending with the ardor of youth and the whole lightly forged into a literary unity which is that of the author's alert, distinguished, and grave personality. The literary manner is delightful for ease, flexibility, and vividness.

How the spiritual background of a family is laid in the following words on her two uncles:

> The two elder sons just through college were entirely impractical. One of them, Samuel, was a rivetted reformer, and went through life in poverty trying to establish impossible Utopias. The older son, whose tempestuous babyhood is much dwelt on in little Eliza's diary, lay, I remember hearing, all day on three chairs, eating nothing but dry bread, and reading Swedenborg.

The sister Cecilia was soon to be taken from her work as a governess by a young French silk manufacturer, Jean Adolphe Beaux; was soon to die in Avignon giving birth to a daughter and namesake, Cecilia. "Little Eliza" was long to survive as a beloved aunt and moral center of the amiable and not very efficient family circle by whom the little orphan of Avignon was promptly reclaimed.

The girl's upbringing at Philadelphia is hit off with an archness and sub-humorous quality that fairly recalls the divine Jane. Those earnest teachers who made a duty and a career of what may be called lady-building to Philadelphia specifications are limned with that kindly precision which we know in Miss Beaux's painted portraits. It would be pleasant to follow that girlhood in a family where good books and good music were in the daily ritual; to pass with the author through the drudgery of teaching cheerfully accepted; through hard yet salutary tasks of commercial lithography, to gradual recognition and success—but to represent this by sample would be unfair to the book. It should be read and digested and not tasted by sample.

Miss Beaux's distinguished acquaintance is lightly and modestly touched, save in the case of her official war portraits of Clemenceau, Lord Beatty, and Cardinal Mercier. Here one is glad that she has passed from hints to complete record. For the making of such portraits in the troubled moments after the war, amounted in each case to a campaign, involving the most elaborate and unwonted technical preparations, a most resolute and yet considerate execution, and a high achievement in personal diplomacy. The chapters are permanently valuable contributions to the psychology of portraiture.

A radiant and quite unpretentious wisdom is perhaps the most precious quality of this rare book. We may illustrate it from a few lines on the part of long memories in any real act of taste!

> What we have come from—which is what we fundamentally are—revives suddenly, under the stimulus of a remote, germinal ancestral urge, recognized and desired as it appears unsummoned in the unlike present; and so it passes into the crucible of performing energy, as the closest, strongest ally of creative impulse; in fact, the guardian and inspirer of our Taste. Taste that in its indomitable demands has nothing in common with the ready-made whimsicality dictated by weariness and satiety.

# Caught in the Web

A NIGHT IN KURDISTAN. By JEAN-RICHARD BLOCH. Translated by STEPHEN HADEN-GUEST. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1931. $2.50.

Reviewed by CLINTON SIMPSON

READERS of "— & Company" may be surprised at the difference in this new book. It is a rich and gorgeous tale of the Orient—which only goes to show the versatility of the author. Not in many a day have we read a story that gives us so much pure pleasure in the reading. It would be difficult to match the narrative skill and resourcefulness of this writer.

Saad, member of a bandit tribe, is sent out for the first time to reconnoitre, before an attack on a city. In Kasir, through a ruse, he gains entry to a Christian home. He loves the daughter, and by his beauty awakens the last flame of passion in the mother. During the night, in attempting to escape, he encounters the mother. He loves her and kills her "like a wolf," escapes, lets his tribe in through the city gates, and returns to protect the girl.

Later, with his tribe, in the mountains, he is dissatisfied. His wife seems "a cat"; everything (his mother was a Christian, he has always felt an outcast from the tribe, though brought up with them) sends him back to the Christian girl. Finally he goes, enters her house in disguise, and is unmasked by her. As he is being stoned to death, she flings herself into the arena and dies with him.

In outline, the story is nothing; but the book is full of beauty and meaning. It is difficult to express in a phrase (if it were easy, why should the book be written?), but there is one passage which seems to contain some of the feeling of the whole:

> Midnight. Something, a wing—that of the Eagle—passes and lightly brushes the zenith. The shepherds sleep against the swollen bellies of the heifers. The vast rumination of the flock is like the grumbling of a waterfall, and peoples the countryside with a mirage of flowing water. This noise, low and continuous, glides into the silence, and becomes one with the mountain. At moments there is a short cry. Some small beast of the earth has been surprised, and utters his last complaint. Nothing could be less sad. Nothing, in this musical farewell, seems to suggest the idea of death. The air becomes sharp and cold. The summits slowly rise, as if to reach the altitude they will have in eternity. The sky, washed by the last trailing veils of twilight, clothes itself in colors of infinity,—dark blue velvet. The warriors, on sentinel duty on the heights that surround the camp, feel sleep approach them, and sing. . . .

Nothing, in the book as a whole, seems to suggest the idea of death, though it is filled with violence and ends with the death of the lovers. Joyfully, eagerly, with an almost voluptuous satisfaction,

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Saad marches toward the destruction of his body, and draws Evanthia with him in the end. This in spite of the cruelty of the way—

> Slowly circling round the bee stuck fast in the web, the two spiders drew in closer. Now one, now the other would test with her antennae the strength of the unhappy wretch. He, powerless to get free of the silk that enveloped him, lost nothing of their manouvres.

So it is with Saad. He is entangled between fate and himself. He accepts fate, he accepts himself. He is happy. In the end, the spiders eat thei rfill.

## A Pleasant Dreamland

READER, I MARRIED HIM. By ANNE GREEN. New York. E. P. Dutton & Co. 1931. $2.50.

THERE is little to say of "Reader, I Married Him" beyond what was said by reviewers all over the country of "The Selbys." It is laid in the same Paris-through-the-looking-glass as its author's earlier book; it is populated by the same sort of pleasant, irresponsible, impossible, delightful people. It suggests all the same metaphors to give an idea of its quality—pink-and-white frosted cake, soap-bubbles, dolls of tinsel and tissue paper. If this were Miss Green's first novel, it would be necessary to use all one's ingenuity to explain the nature of this paradoxical book, its naiveté and sophistication, its atmosphere that is neither realism nor extravaganza. But as it is, all that anyone will want to know is, "Is it as good as 'The Selbys'?"

It is quite as good as "The Selbys" and perhaps a little better. It is most unusual for a second novel to aim so plainly at repeating the effect of the first, and to succeed so well; generally a second book must either show an advance in aim, or fall short in execution. No one could say that "Reader, I Married Him" falls short of "The Selbys," but its conception is almost the same. It is not quite the same, for on the very last page, in the last paragraph, there is the introduction of irony, very faint and delicate, but irony none the less, a quality that is apt to be fatal to the sugar-plum world of the book. And by the same token, the heroine, after some experiments in white magic (to be explained, if you will, as the operation of little understood but natural forces), finds that it is true that *"On ne badine pas avec l'amour."* And since most of Miss Green's work hitherto has consisted in exchanging irresponsible badinage with love, this may promise a change for the future.

"Reader, I Married Him" would have profited by more of these foreign elements. In reading it one feels a certain monotony of key, which becomes more apparent if one reads it with a recollection of "The Selbys" in mind, or if one compares it with two books which, though rather like it in spirit, are far superior to it, "The Venetian Glass Nephew" and "Zuleika Dobson." An important reason for their superiority (besides a more careful style) is that in both of them the key is constantly changing; their fantasy comes near to broad humor, near to keen satire, near to tragedy and to pathos, near to half a dozen other *genres;* one is never allowed to grow sufficiently at home to ask questions. But "Reader, I Married Him" lies in the same pleasant dreamland all the way through.

*This may seem an ungrateful way to speak of an* unusual and charming book which has given excellent entertainment, but one would be doing Miss Green less than justice if one did not say that it seems probable that so far she has done herself less than justice.

## A Good First Novel

THREE STEEPLES. By LEROY MACLEOD. New York: Covici-Friede. 1931. $2.50.

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT

THIS is a first novel of unusual maturity. It is laid in a country village somewhere in the eastern Middle West; there are already two churches there, but one of the leading citizens determines that there must be one for his sect, the Methodists. His struggles to maintain the third meeting-house in the face of apathy and hard times parallel the agonies of conscience of his son Bruce, a theological student and later a Methodist preacher; in the end the church is burned just as Bruce perceives that he has caused one case of religious mania, and has done more harm than good in other ways. This is the backbone of the novel, but it is far from being the whole of it; the entire village and the farming country round enter the story; indeed, the plot is at once the weakest and least important element of the book.

The most admirable element is the setting. The author clearly knows it intimately and sees it evenly. His countryside is neither a drab prison nor an earthly paradise; his people have none of the insane repressions or pagan delights in the fecundity of the earth that the country folk of urban authors have. Similarly the gelding of a foal, the farrowing of a sow, and talk of breeding and stud, appear in their right proportion. Mr. MacLeod makes unusual appeals to the physical senses on every page, whether in describing real actions, as when he says of a boy riding in a jolting wagon, "his flesh fairly jounced on his cheek-bones," or in similes, as when he speaks of some one "hardening his words in his mind, as a snowball is hardened in the vice of the knees." From Mr. MacLeod's keen observation, close knowledge, and detached viewpoint we get a noteworthy impression of his farms, vivid, authentic, and enjoyable.

But Mr. MacLeod's desire to include all his country town has led him astray in the story. There are too many characters who have nothing in particular to do, who are genuine enough, but not of sufficient interest to pay for the space that is given to them. Mr. MacLeod has in fact wavered between two protagonists; he has wanted to make the community itself the central figure, always a tempting experiment and always a dangerous one, and one foredoomed to failure here, since by hypothesis only a minority of the community is interested in the Methodist church. There is an alternative hero in the young minister, Bruce, who holds the interest while he is on the stage, but who is too often absent. The author seems to have felt this difficulty, and to have tried to overcome it by the symbolism of the meeting-houses, but there is no necessary reason why the Methodist church should have burned just when Bruce despaired of his ministry, and the other two steeples of the title scarcely figure in the book at all. The device serves rather to point the difficulty than to obviate it.

But when everything has been urged against it, "Three Steeples" is much more worthy of consideration than most first novels, and gives great promise for its author's later work.

## Romantic New Orleans

OLD NEW ORLEANS. The Sixties: Widows Only; The Seventies: Strife; The Eighties: Closed Shutters; The Nineties: Mardi Gras Masks. By FRANCES TINKER and EDWARD LAROCQUE TINKER. New York: D. Appleton & Company. 1931. $5 the set.

Reviewed by HERSCHEL BRICKELL

CERTAIN cities are born to romance just as definitely as certain women. New Orleans is one of those about whose destiny there has never been any doubt, a place of a quality as distinct as the peculiar blend of bloods that makes it something exotic in America; a place of emotion, a place that has had its full share of dark tragedy, and its full share, too, of gayety.

The prevailing spirit, therefore, of the four novelettes in which Mr. and Mrs. Tinker have collaborated—Mr. Tinker has already given ample demonstration of his knowledge of the city in his "Lafcadio Hearn's American Days" and in "Toucoutou"—is very properly romantic. It is just as proper that the four books should offer a wide variety of moods, ranging from the far-off sadness of the disappointed lovers in "Widows Only" to the horror, relieved with humor, of "Closed Shutters" and from the sharp and effective drama of "Strife" to the lightheartedness and sparkle of "Mardi Gras Masks."

If the four volumes differ in mood, they share another virtue, in addition to their fittingly prevailing romantic spirit. They are filled with authentic atmosphere; painstakingly accurate even in small details, and very evidently done by two people who know much more of New Orleans than may be learned from books or even from casual acquaintance with the city itself. There is understanding and sympathy, as well as knowledge, back of the writing. It is vital that books of this sort should give the reader the feeling of the locality with which they are concerned, and this these volumes achieve with notable success. They are also striking for their portrayal of the fascinating and difficult creole character.

The foreignness of the background is emphasized in the very first story, which is concerned with the 'sixties, and which is set on a plantation near New Orleans. A descendant of early German settlers falls in love with Toinette, a Creole, and their love affair moves forward to the accompaniment of the hatreds that are stirred up by the threat of the Franco-Prussian War. About them lie the ruins of the civilization destroyed by another war. Their love affair ends in tragedy, but there is humor in the telling, delicate bits of description, and sketches of characters that give it savor.

"Strife," a story of the gall-bitter Reconstruction period, nowhere in the South any worse than in New Orleans, is the strongest of the four tales. The principal characters are two married couples, in one of which the man is syphilitic, and in the other the woman a neurotic who is losing her eyesight. The healthy pair manage to escape their afflicted mates, the tense drama of the four being played out against the full horror of savage race hatred and civil war.

"Closed Shutters" moves forward another decade to tell a touching story of the pride that is as typical of New Orleans as its gayety, and to introduce a remarkably well-done negro mammy whose dialect is a notable feature of the book. Her vivid speech, filled with color, pungency, and humor, is exactly reproduced and helps to bring to life one of the best-done characters in the four stories.

"Mardi Gras Masks" is a light tale of young love at Carnival time and of the trick a boy played on his stubborn Creole father to win his consent to marry the girl he loved. It was a neat trick, perhaps of not quite sufficient importance to carry the full weight of a novelette, but the details of the Mardi Gras celebration are entertainingly presented. There could be no book about New Orleans without a chapter on Mardi Gras; the Tinkers recall an old saying that no Creole dies at Carnival, so passionate is the desire to live for one more celebration.

Of the four books, three suffer from a certain weakness of construction. "Strife" is without the fault; its plot is excellent and carries to the end. The others, seemingly based, like "Strife," on actual incidents, are rather lacking in plot. The structure is overburdened with description and incidental narration. This is particularly true of "Closed Shutters," which is based upon a curious and very moving occurrence that might have served better as the framework of a short story than of a novelette; but one suspects that few readers with any affection for the richness of negro speech would surrender any of old Emma's conversation for tighter construction.

Whatever the novelettes lack in architecture, however, they more than make up for in the intelligence and skill with which their backgrounds are done and in the abounding small touches that could not have been supplied by writers not deeply familiar and sympathetic with the subject matter. Altogether, the four stories make a distinguished addition to the series begun with Edith Wharton's "Old New York," series which, when finished, should make a valuable addition to the literary history of the country.

In format the New Orleans books follow Mrs. Wharton's quartet. They have end-papers and other attractive decorations by Edward C. Caswell, and the frontispieces are from well-chosen etchings by Joseph Pennell. They are comfortable small books to hold in the hand, and their type-pages are refreshingly easy on the eye.

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Months ago according to a correspondent of the New York *Times*, an announcement was made of an organized effort, with a fund of $105,000, to obtain adequate historical treatment of Western Pennsylvania. The Buhl Foundation made a grant of $70,000 to the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania for a five-year program of research and writing of the history of the section. The University of Pittsburgh added $25,000 and the historical society $10,000 for the undertaking.

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## The Bowling Green

# John Mistletoe, XXVII.

PERHAPS there was some special spiritual emanation from old St. Paul's churchyard. Leaving the office in a warm noontime one found chalked on the pavement *One Hour for Lunch and No Time for Jesus*. The bare arms of some vehement street-preacher were raised above the heads of his little congregation of idlers. Keep, oh keep, the eyes of wonder, Mistletoe used to say to himself, trying to see all these amazements unblurred by any kind of opinion. Those naked arms and clenched hands lifted in monitory gesture deserved the pencil of Leonardo. What a drawing: the circle of listeners with straw hats tilted warmly back on heads; the graves and the brown portico of St. Paul's beyond; those desperate arms rising in threat or supplication.—Or a Salvation Army service by the curb on Columbus Circle one winter night: the piteous chop-logic of the preaching wenches imploring passers-by to be saved; asserting their own blessed salvation and preparedness to meet their Maker at any moment. They nearly needed it, for just then a wheeling taxi, poofing blue gasoline fume, backed unawares into their little kneeling semicircle. How they sprang up in mid-prayer, but even honest human terror did not halt their plea.

There were days (perhaps they came best after a full night's sleep) when there was a spell in the air. When wisps of steam drifting softly from the downtown summits were the gay plumes of gallant venture; when every street was Liberty Street. Days when the mind was too slow to trace the trembles of wonder sifted between earth and sky. It was as though someone had tossed a new planet into the level pond of space, and even here the circling ripples were discernible. If his head were thick or vitality low, then into the crowded subway. Faces braver, more humorous, more strangely carved than ever seen before, to wake him to joy and pity. There was one, still unforgotten, an old Irishman fantastically modelled and seamed and with one white cataract eye—a face like the drawings in the old German book of Max and Moritz. Faces full of dumb testimony to the reality of life. Lifted corrugations of brows, surly pursings of the nether lip, or sudden smilings, the flesh over the cheekbone tightened upward and outward by pleasure. A negro platform sweeper pushing a long-handled brush with a slow, sly ripple of his bandy legs—legs not a bit less comic than Mr. Chaplin's, had that dark unconscious millionaire been aware of his fortune. A girl demonstrating an adding machine in a window on Broadway. Her eyes were fixed on a sheet of figures, but her hand flying merrily over the keys like a white hen picking up corn; so nimble you would imagine it was the hand that was doing the thinking.

The profile of every building was an acrostic of its own. At one particular spot on Fulton Street the little brown spire of St. Paul's was relieved against the overtowering pinnacles of Woolworth (then unmarred by a great clumsy cubistry alongside it.) This suggested the question whether ten cents in the cash register gets nearer heaven than ten cents put into the collection plate. The Telephone and Telegraph building was always a place of magic: fluted pillars, ceiling of starry tablets, hanging bowls of light, bronze telephone booths with heavy doors so nicely hinged that when suddenly closed the air compressed inside the booth startled the ear-drums. And on the glass counters of the Dey Street side, stacks of fresh clean telegraph blanks just laid out there to jot down memoranda for poems. I do not wonder if he grew a bit arrant sometimes, and wrote on one of those telegraph blanks:

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All cities to the seeing eye
Are beautiful; there you descry
Men's miseries and competitions,
Their paradoxes and ambitions,
Grown to the fullest dreadfulness—
All passions at their proud excess.
For students of the troubled heart
Cities are perfect works of art.

It was part of his job to go up to the Composing Room every morning and consult friendly little Peter Augsberger, who "made up" the editorial page, on the lay-out of his column. There he became aware of the noble fascination of a newspaper composing room. He used to think that the four most intensely living places he had known were a newspaper composing room, the engines of a steamship, the cab of a locomotive, and the stage manager's station near the switchboard of a theatre.

The Comp Room is never happier than when it has a chance to play one of its traditional jokes. Two distinguished men of letters joined the staff of the *Post* to conduct its newly enlarged literary supplement. They were not familiar with old printshop lore about those imaginary parasites "type-lice." The Comp Room was delighted to collaborate in spoof by setting up a small printed memo which brought consternation to our old Endymion. The literary editors had taken great pains with the artistic format of their supplement, but when Endymion arrived at the office one morning he found on his desk the following:—

MEMO. from Foreman Comp. Room:

I regret very much that the Book Review will have a very ragged appearance this week. A number of type-lice have got into the galleys and eaten away some of the type face. We have taken every precaution to guard against these vermin, but, as you know, this will happen sometimes. We are having our machines fumigated and hope it will not occur again.

Pale with dismay he hastened upstairs to inquire what could be done to discourage "these vermin." Gravely the compositors deplored the matter, but insisted that it was probably because the lice in the *Post's* cases had been underfed for years. "There isn't much chance in a daily newspaper for a type-louse to get a square meal, things move too fast; it's when you put in a weekly supplement, and keep overset matter standing, they're naturally tempted by all those long rich words." Endymion saw he'd been had; but he prorated the twit by assuring his editor-in-chief that they must be careful henceforward not to use anything longer than five syllables.

Mistletoe and Endymion had their full share of the humors of Grub Street. Creatures of contrasting physique, one wide and solid, the other long and wraithlike, a colleague who found them poring over a bookstall almost purchased them as a copy of *Sense and Sensibility*. That was probably at Mendoza's, the famous Ann Street shop to which downtown critics always hastened in seizures of indigence, with an armful of review copies for disposal. Such a group, making for Mendoza's with burden enough to buy a good lunch for the crowd, were startled by menacing gesture from one of the bookstore staff who saw them coming. Posted at the front door he waved them wildly away. Wondering whether this meant No Lunch, they retired into Theatre Alley to consult. There from the back door of Miller's Restaurant exhaled savory undulations of food. The thought of finnan haddie and the series of beautiful Miller's Daughters (as in Tennyson) who supervised the service became more poignant. Mistletoe and his comrades were uneasy. What, was Ike Mendoza not going to buy any more books? Then one of the younger Mendozas arrived to explain. "Wait a few minutes," he said. "Ike's got a wealthy customer in there who says he's decided to begin collecting Contemporary Firsts. If he sees all you poets coming in here to peddle review copies, the glamor will be gone."

"Never mind glamor," said the poets coarsely. "When do we eat?"

"Go ahead and get lunch," said the great-hearted merchant. "I'll come up in time to pay the check." So they parked their precious wares at the back door of Miller's and went in.

The Three Hours for Lunch Club frequently passed along Ann Street on the way to admire a secluded courtyard (since built over) where John Jacob Astor's fur warehouse still existed. It was their ambition to convert that old building into a downtown country club. That dream, like the cruises of the ship *Tusitala* and the establishment of a Free State in an ancient Foundry in Hoboken, eventually came to nothing. Probably the Three Hours for Lunch Club was the kind of airy republic that flourishes best without physical tenures. But the dreams that failed were the dearest of all.

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To study New York as a botanist would study a jungle was the only purpose he could assure himself. I have not yet heard of any botanist who can tell us what the jungle means. To examine and savor each day as it came was task sufficient. To be obedient to the suggestions of impulse; to float, mentally, with the current, not struggle too hard against it; to do what you find yourself doing, was his clumsy attempt to phrase the intuition. When they were living one winter in a small furnished apartment on Morningside Heights (fascinating name) he lay on the floor at night writing. The only desk available was a rickety rosewood toy too wabbly for decent penmanship, so he wrote on the floor. Then for once he did not worry about choice of word or comfort of posture. Good or bad the fable leaped from the ink and ran across the paper. That was joy.

There was plenty of despair behind. Readers of Santayana have learned to luxuriate in despair. "Art, so long as it needs to be a dream, will never cease to prove a disappointment. Its facile cruelty, its narcotic abstraction, can never sweeten the evils we return to." Loved as they may be, the necessary conditions of work in a newspaper office are painful to a man with slow and stupid hopes. How to bridge the gap between the dreams of art and the ruptures of the day? How can they be fused? Probably they can't. More and more he was tormented by the incongruity between the vision glimpsed and the hasty note of it that must be put down in print. "In the faces of plain men in subway or suburban smoker I often see the unmistakable look and lineament of the poet. How many unspoken poets are ground under by the pressure of life, which has its hard hydraulic laws: the farther below the surface you are, the greater the pressure exerted on all sides." Such comments, in a hundred variations of mood, he wrote down in the long series of journals he kept in those days. The prime puzzle was that even men wise and generous of heart were hardly more successful in ordering their lives than the ephemeral paragrapher. Absurdity, like a mongrel cur, ran yapping at their shins. The banana peel was always on the pavement for the heel of the savant. Was the only solution to see life as gigantic farce? He had the practical joker's very special distaste for seeing himself the butt of the jest. "It's because we all lead such unnatural lives" a grizzling faun once said to him in an accent of singular sincerity. This he often pondered. In what respects may modern life be considered unnatural? A theme for a very hardy essayist.

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Yet there are phases of that unnaturalness that are full ecstasy. To spend an evening reading is very likely unnatural, but hours with Santayana or Lowes Dickinson were hard to surpass. "His blue morocco slippers donned, What evenings then had Toulemonde." There were lunar nights of clear glassy stillness, white translucence, when the house was drowned on the floor of an ocean of clarity. The soft pallid light might have been transfused through endless leagues of pure unmoving water. After an evening drugged in reverie, how strange the unfamiliar patterns of the early stars. In those happy moments one has no fear of any truth. One *is* truth; naked, and at the bottom of a well. Though born sub signo Tauri he had twinges of Ariel. At such times Ariel wriggles out of the cloven pine; men come awake for a few hours before relapsing into the sleepwalk of daily life. Then they know that there are meanings never yet guessed, depth on depth of power and hope. He pleased himself by putting down naive memoranda:

The arts and sciences are distinct from other regions of life in at least one respect: among their true servants there is no such thing as envy. A writer may say jocularly to another that he envies him something he has written; but in the exact meaning it is not so. Where there is, in the mercantile sense, no competition, there can be no jealousy. If a poet or a painter or a mathematician does more delicate or more original work than his confrere, the latter does not envy him. He loves him for it.

That, incidentally, is why I love so many contemporary writers.

He was getting prickles of that thought uttered by Anatole France in the dedication of *La Vie Litteraire* (which, incidentally, was written for a newspaper, *Le Temps*):—"Nous parlons de nous-mêmes chaque fois que nous n'avons pas la force de nous taire." He put the idea himself rather neatly:

This is all we ever say:
*Ego, mei, mihi, me.*

Comedy will always pursue the dreamer. He is her favorite sport. A young poet was once invited to speak at a gathering of haut-monde ladies at the most genteel women's club in New York. He was gratified by this summons, for it looked to him like what simpletons call Recognition. Nicely clad he made his way thither. But the rascal divinity, utilizing some irrelevant proletarian as her machine, cast on the front steps of the clubhouse a soft pancake

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# An American Language

IS there an American Language? To some the question will seem as impertinent as that of the Oxford undergraduate who happened to be in Cambridge. Being stopped in the evening by the proctor with the usual question "Are you a member of this University?" the ingenuous youth asked in well-feigned surprise, "*Is* there a University here?"

The question of a real American language, possible or actual, is not new; it has now a respectable tradition of a century and a half. During that time it has naturally changed its character. With those who first raised it, the wish was mainly father to the thought. A new and independent nation, they argued, ought to have a language of its own, and that language ought, in name at least, to be American. It was the same feeling which finally led the Scots to call their language Scottish, after they had for some centuries acquiesced in calling it English. To hasten the process in the United States, some enthusiasts proposed to adopt another language altogether; even Greek and Hebrew were suggested. No one seems to have thought of a cultivated form of Choctaw or Cherokee, or some other of the real American languages with which some "linguisters" at least were, or professed to be, thoroughly acquainted.

It was difficult to combine this idea of a new language with a tenet which also had its strong advocates,—that it was desirable to maintain a high standard of English, and to continue the efforts of the eighteenth century to refine and polish it. It seems quite clear that none of those who discussed the subject in the last quarter of the eighteenth century had any appreciation of the extent to which new American developments had already taken place. The ordinary American citizen, the New England farmer and fisherman, the backwoodsman, the Southern planter and hunter, had already enlarged the vocabulary to a remarkable extent, and had adopted some turns of phrasing definitely distinct from those of standard English. The greater part of what they had thus created and established passed unnoticed by both the critics and the defenders of American usage, who directed their attention too exclusively to literary practice. Even the strongest nationalists would have found it difficult to illustrate by actual specimens that American language which they either advocated in theory or were convinced would come in time by natural changes. They were just as likely, when it came to the point, to defend an alleged Americanism by proving that it was in fact a survival from older English.

These academic discussions had little effect, if any, on the situation. It was direct contact between British and American speakers, in the early part of the nineteenth century, that first brought into prominence the difference between the two standards of vocabulary and pronunciation. The books written by English travelers in the United States at that time usually contain more or less extensive passages relating to American peculiarities of speech, or make special mention of the words and forms that were unfamiliar to them. It is of little importance in this connexion that they could frequently have heard the same words or forms in various parts of the British Islands. There they would have recognized them as local dialect and ignored them; in the United States they regarded them as characteristic of the people as a whole, and in many instances were justified in doing so by the wide area over which they found them diffused, and by their currency in different classes of society.

The native of the United States, on the other hand, becoming conscious of the distinction, began to call his language American in contrast to English. As early as 1837 we find the new designation in the *Southern Literary Messenger*: "insomuch that I speak American with the brogue of one or the other of them in spite of my teeth." Twenty years later an Englishman who visited Salt Lake City records that "the Missourian expressed his astonishment that I could speak such good American, having been such a short time in the country." The right of the genuine native speech to the distinctive title was recognized by Schele de Vere, when he wrote in 1871, "we still speak English, but we talk American," while at the same time he had no hesitation in asserting "as yet there is no American language."

The present state of this long-standing question can be briefly gathered by a consideration of the titles of the most recent books and articles which deal with it. The very number of these is an indication of a widespread interest in the matter. To Mr. Mencken the subject on which he writes so fully and so forcibly is "The American Language," and the contents of his book are a sustained argument for the correctness of the title. Professor Tucker, with a different outlook, prefers "American English," while Professor Krapp avoids a definite issue by giving to his two volumes of historical survey the title of "The English Language in America." If we turn to the bibliography in the first of these works, the same variety is apparent. There are some sixteen articles on the "American Language," half a dozen on "American Speech," a dozen on "American English," and three or four on the "English Language in America." Recognizing that its distinctive matter must be largely colloquial, the editors of the new journal specially devoted to the subject appropriately named it "American Speech."

The reason for this variation lies partly in the subject matter itself, and partly in the outlook or intention of the writer. The two strains which go to make up American English of the present day, or of the past century, have to be clearly distinguished before any valid conclusions can be drawn. The writing of English in the colonies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was not accommodated in every respect to the steady growth and partial change of the spoken tongue. A conventional standard, with such natural modifications from time to time as took place in England itself, has been closely followed by all serious writers and public speakers, and has influenced the everyday talk of all educated persons. The differences between this and standard English have never been very marked. No ordinary English reader is troubled about Americanisms in the pages of Prescott or Motley; no ordinary American reader is repelled by Briticisms in those of Macaulay or Freeman. The lover of nature in either country will read Thoreau or Jefferies with equal understanding and pleasure, and certainly without the slightest feeling that he is changing from one language to another. To any one who fixes his attention solely on writings of this kind, and on the enormous mass of scientific, technical, or general matter printed year by year in the books, magazines, and newspapers of both countries, the suggestion of a separate American language may well seem absurd. Can an American writer be said to use his own language only when he becomes obscure or altogether unintelligible to the English reader?

ON the other hand this recognized convention in the writing of English has by no means set a fixed standard for the language in America any more than in Great Britain. The new developments have been many, and collectively can be drawn up to present a formidable front against any one who maintains the essential unity of the language on the two sides of the Atlantic. A complete list of Americanisms unfamiliar or absolutely unknown to the ordinary Englishman would be something of a surprise both for its extent and its variety. A number of them could be discounted as local or otherwise limited in use, but a large proportion have so wide a currency that they cannot fairly be compared with English dialect, which varies from shire to shire, and even from village to village. Whoever fixes his attention on this feature of American speech, and its direct reflection in certain forms of writing, will naturally be inclined to assert that the vision of the old enthusiasts has been realized, that we now actually have an American Language. Beyond a doubt it would be possible to compile an "American Reader" which would require an extensive glossary to make its contents quite intelligible anywhere outside of the United States.

The question is partly one of names,—of the meaning to be attached to the word "language." What constitutes a language? How far must two forms of speech, originally identical, diverge from each other before they become entitled to separate designations? How far do political considerations come in, as well as linguistic? There are few clear analogies to argue from, for the rise of the modern languages has mainly taken place under conditions unlike those of the present day. Speaking generally, closely related forms of speech are regarded as separate languages only when a clear difference in form (not merely in vocabulary) is accompanied by political separation, so that each becomes a recognized standard within its own area. In this case we have the political separation, but have we the requisite difference in form? Are the points of difference between the English of Great Britain and the United States more numerous and more vital than those between the Portuguese of Portugal and Brazil, or the Spanish of Spain and Peru?

IT is easy to begin to enumerate outstanding differences between American and English usage. Anyone familiar with the everyday speech of the two countries can without much thought put down a score or two of words or phrases, the choice of which would at once reveal the nationality of the speaker. The use of the sidewalk in place of the pavement, the carrying of a grip in place of a bag, traveling by a street car, or surface car, or trolley instead of by a tram, using an elevator and not a lift, taking a round trip as the equivalent of a return ticket, commuting instead of holding a season ticket, making a reservation instead of booking a seat or place, having baggage rather than luggage, and being looked after on the train by a conductor instead of a guard,—all of these will inevitably stamp the American tourist with the place of his origin. In keeping with these modes of speech, he may also be expected to ask for candy and crackers when he means sweets and biscuits, to talk of drug stores and book stores, of editorials and schedules (with sk), and may cause some bewilderment by saying that his second class mail need not be forwarded. Conversely the British traveler in the United States must familiarize himself with these differences, or run the risk of not understanding and being himself misunderstood.

With clear-cut distinctions like these, it is a simple task to set down a number of items in parallel columns as illustrative of the extent to which "American" differs from English. There are few, however, who could carry such lists beyond the first hundred pairs without considerable thinking and verifying of impressions. Whenever a long list of such variants is produced, there are usually expressions of dissent from one side to the other, showing that the differences are by no means so absolute as has been assumed. The fact that the English of Great Britain is far from uniform is apt to be overlooked in such comparisons. The ordinary American term, while strange to the southern Englishman, may be perfectly well known to the Englishman of the north or to the Scot. It is legitimate, no doubt, to give *railway* as typically English in contrast to the American *railroad*, but the fact is that railroad has from the beginning been the familiar term in the north of England and Scotland, and that railway is far from unknown in the United States. Similar modifying notes would have to be added to many of such pairs of variants, if strict accuracy is desired. Parallel columns cannot always convey the entire truth. To set down without comment, as has been done, pitcher and jug, mantelpiece and chimney-piece, rare and underdone, shoe and boot, shoemaker and bootmaker, as definite contrasts between the usage of the two countries, is to leave a considerable part of the tale untold. A drug store may answer to a chemist's shop, but the ordinary chemist's shop in England bears little resemblance to a drug store of the usual type. What would naturally be a shop in any part of Great Britain may as naturally be a store all over the United States, but this bald contrast does not imply that there are no stores in London, or shops in New York and Chicago. The United States has even preferred shop in some applications where it is not usual in English.

Another important factor is that even the unquestioned differences are not permanent. Some of them are already being effaced by closer contact between the two countries, familiarizing the natives of the one with the speech of the other. Sometimes it is English use that affects American; more frequently, perhaps, the influence is the other way. The

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# by Sir William A. Craigie

effect of American English on that of Britain, and on the English-speaking world at large, has yet to be traced in detail, but some of the main facts are clear enough. Down to the middle of the nineteenth century the Americanisms adopted in English were almost exclusively those which denoted something specially belonging to the country,—the very terms which the colonists had found it necessary to take over from the Indians, the French, or the Spaniards, or to invent for themselves. All others were stoutly resisted by the purists, who began the hunt for them in all the productions of American writers after the War of Independence, and frequently carried it on with more zeal than knowledge. How jealous the watch for Americanisms was, can be seen by the prolonged opposition to some of them, as *reliable* and *lengthy*. Even *prairie* seemed a useless novelty to Southey, who thought the Americans showed "singularly little taste in preferring it" to the old *savanna*.

The growth of American literature in the nineteenth century, and especially the rise of a real American school of writers, not afraid to use the words and phrases of the ordinary speaker, completely altered the situation. English readers rapidly became accustomed to the vocabulary of the new writers, which attracted them by its novel and picturesque character, and either deliberately adopted or unconsciously assimilated no small part of it. In this way, for nearly a century, words and phrases of purely American origin have crept into ordinary English almost unnoticed. Without this the differences between the American and the English idiom at the present day would be more numerous and obvious than they are.

The tendency to separate, which has seemed so inevitable to many, is being counteracted in other ways. The very growth of the population in the United States and Canada, which will bring about in time a shifting of the centre of English, will also act as a uniting force, affecting Britain and the British colonies on the one hand, and on the other that large section of the world which is steadily acquiring English as a second tongue. As a profound student of the subject wrote in 1915: "More Americans write and cultivate English than there are English natives," and that superiority in numbers is bound to tell in the end. The effect is already clear in some directions; for example, in the inclusion of "American variants" in a recent "Dictionary of English Pronunciation." It is significant that this dictionary was prepared in Japan, where, as in China and elsewhere in the Orient, the different standards of English meet and have to be reconciled by the native teacher and student as best they can. From England come protests against the Americanizing of English through the "captions" on the screens of American films. The influence of this has clearly to be reckoned with, as it will affect many who do not read American novels or magazines, but obviously the diffusion of this type of English throughout the world will have a unifying effect. The results may at first dismay the purist, but unless the English of the future is to be unworthy of its past, it may be trusted to select what is worth preserving and to allow the rest to fall into the rubbish-shoot of obsolete slang, which is as dead as anything in language can be.

Prophecy in regard to languages is no more to be depended on than in any other line. If the prophets had been right, some languages now flourishing in Europe would have been extinct several generations ago. Looking forward, however, with the tendencies of the present time to guide us, it may be suggested that the steady expansion of English as a world language may bring with it the solution of the question with which we started. A distinct American language, clearly marked off from other forms of English, in the same way as one Germanic or Romanic language is from another, is less likely to arise than seemed possible a century ago. The Great American Novel, we are assured, can no longer be written on account of the complex variety which has come into American life, making it impossible for one book to mirror all its phases. The new American Language, it may be, is equally impossible, for the reason that it can no longer develop by itself, but must keep in touch with that wider English which concerns the world at large. What part it may play in the further development of that English is another question, which may as well be left to time to settle, with or without the help of such Councils or Academies, or other advisory bodies as may seek to take a hand in the work.

*Sir William A. Craigie, author of the foregoing article, is Professor of English in the University of Chicago, and has been joint-editor of the "Oxford English Dictionary" since* 1901. *The holder of honorary degrees from Oxford, Cambridge, and Calcutta universities, and formerly Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford, he has contributed numerous articles on Scottish, Gaelic, and Scandinavian subjects to periodicals, and is the author of many books, among which are "The Pronunciation of English," "English Spelling," and "The Study of American English."*

## The Birth of Mind

ESSAYS ON THE NATURAL ORIGIN OF THE MIND. By C. A. STRONG. London: Macmillan & Co. 1930.

Reviewed by DICKINSON S. MILLER

PROFESSOR STRONG'S book is a systematic and most original attempt to fill up the most serious gap in the theory of evolution, namely, the birth of mind. How is that strange product, the *knowing* animal, produced? How does one thing become aware of another, or, taking the relation from the other side, how does one thing appear to another? In what does awareness consist? Thus his book has to become in great part a theory of knowledge, that is, of perception and of memory, belief and anticipation—such a theory as shall show how these faculties may by a natural process come into being when they had not before existed.

Every step of his argument is taken with a keen sense of its logical responsibilities. It would be misleading to say merely that he gives us one form of the theory that the universe is composed of "mind-stuff," for the "substance" or "existent" that he calls "sentient" is conceived very differently from the mind-stuff of Clifford, Paulsen, or Haymans; and Mr. Strong distinctly denies that the sentient or feeling quality of substance is in itself consciousness or awareness. He does not at all, like Dr. Whitehead, seek to sove the problem of perception by attributing perception in some form to all matter.

Perception is exclusively an animal function, and its rise must be explained. The key is found in the phenomenon of attention, that is, in the animal's manner of reacting to the actual object whose presence has affected its sense-organs. Biologically speaking, that thing in nature and not any "image" in the animals own sentient being becomes the object of the animals activities; *i. e.*, they are directed to the object and not to an "image." And the feelings or forms of sentience aroused by the effects on the sense-organs become perception when they are "used as signs" of the external object: that is, when the animal offends and acts as if such an object were there and as if it were in the direction and at the distance where it really is. Thus to offend and act is to treat the nature of the sense-datum as if it were the nature of the object, it is to "assert" the content of the sense-datum of the object. In ordinary perception this assertion is partly accurate and partly false. It is the biological relation of the organism to the thing that is affecting its sense-organs that engenders the outward vision that we call knowledge. There is a close criticism offered both of "the new realism" and of idealism, which have in common what the author regards as the root fallacy of "phenomenalism."

An entirely original thesis of the book is its theory of introspection. All knowledge involves a bodily reaction and introspection does not escape the rule, though here the reaction is not toward an outward body but toward our own body. In all knowledge the thing known (in introspection certain feelings) is numerically distinct from that through which it is known (here certain other feelings). Thus error in rendering the intrinsic quality of the object of introspection is as possible as in perception (here the author is in agreement with Mr. Bertrand Russell) and physiological grounds are offered for holding that our own impressions of the precise nature of our own feelings cannot be correct.

The general theory has points of kinship with Mr. Santayana's analysis of knowledge, but Mr. Strong is more lucid, and more direct in his attack on the chief problems; moreover, he offers a metaphysical philosophy of matter and of the self and an explanation of the variegated qualities of matter as experience presents them which is wholly lacking in Mr. Santayana's account. The present reviewer has his grave difficulties with the doctrines of both, but as regards the book now in question he cannot but recognize the rare intellectual delicacy, the sustained clearness, the distinction of style, the all-embracing breadth of generalization that mark it. It undertakes nothing less than to explain why there appear to be the two distinct facts, mind and matter, in the world. He will add that he cannot conceive, in the present state of philosophy, a better discipline for any thinker than to exact from himself a clear and completely candid statement (it is the complete candor with oneself that in such statements is mostly wanting) of why he accepts or does not accept each item of the hypothesis wrought out and defended with such precision in this book.

## John Mistletoe, XXVII.

(*Continued from page* 613)

of discarded chewing gum. It stuck to the poet's sole. It did not become noticeable until he was sitting on a little raised platform which was richly covered with a crimson rug. He was introduced and rose—carrying the rug with him. His innocent recitations were ruined by his efforts to stand utterly fixed and conceal the humiliating adhesion. Or consider the case of the Distinguished Critic who had to preside at a gala dinner of the P. E. N. Club—a serious international federation of writers—where the guest of honor was a famous and newly-landed German philosopher. The chairman sat uneasily at the High Table, for the philosopher had not yet arrived at the board. Time passed, the great hotel ballroom resounded with the merry clatter of well-dressed litterateurs, but still the seat at his right was empty. Then appeared the literary agent who was the philosopher's business factotum in America. "I'm having a terrible time with the Count," he said. "I've got him as far as the ante-room, but he says he absolutely cannot speak unless he has a glass of champagne. He *never* speaks without a glass of champagne to fortify him. He positively refuses to enter the dining room unless you can promise him a drink of wine."

"But merciful Buddha," faltered the wretched chairman. . . . "Dinner of ceremony . . . republic of letters . . . reporters here . . . occasion of dignity . . . law-abiding artists . . . conscience . . . ethics . . . damnation . . . I don't carry bottles of champagne around with me . . . getting late. . . . Where's the nearest speakeasy?"

A messenger was dispatched in haste, while the literary agent calmed the sage in the ante-room and the chairman called on a preliminary speaker to make the necessary remarks about international comities of intellect. The envoy was not able to get wine, but returned with a bottle of Tenderloin Scotch. In a corner of the room was a vast grand piano. The agent raised its lid. There was an impressive hush, for the convives supposed there was to be music. But behind the shelter of that mahogany bulwark and a thin bosquet of palms crouched the unhappy Chairman, pouring a beaker of raw spirit for the philosopher. They say he made an excellent speech.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

In the revised version of "The Critic," which was staged for the first time at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, recently, Mr. Lennox Robinson not only clothed the Sheridan characters in the dress of to-day but quite definitely modernized the dialogue and localized the allusions to the Dublin of 1931. What Mr. Robinson has done, and done excellently, is to take that first act and give all its allusions a definite Dublin setting.

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# Some Recent Fiction

## A Disillusioned Woman

NO GOODNESS IN THE WORM. By GAY TAYLOR. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1931.

Reviewed by BERNARDINE K. SCHERMAN

IT is a great satisfaction—after reading the dozens of contrived and artificial novels that are dumped on the public every month—to come across at last a novel that reveals a soul. The author of "No Goodness in the Worm" may have had no such lofty purpose, but unconsciously or otherwise, she has achieved it. It is the story of an English girl—one of three—all of whom apparently came to womanhood in the period of the war, and who are now suffering the disillusionment and discouragement of a gloomy, dispirited civilization. Though the author never states a thesis, and writes her novel only as a personal story, still the impression remains that this is indeed the state of mind of most thinking English women of thirty or so. After all the proportion of women to men in England before the war was about three to one, and since then of course far greater. Women have had to become economically independent, and to this end, better educated and far more emancipated from families and tradition than before; while the flower of their own generation of men has been killed off. It is an abnormal state of affairs apparently affecting many of the younger English writers, and certainly admirably reflected in this first novel of Miss Taylor.

Valentine, her heroine, tries marriage and is dissatisfied with it because of a husband timid and afraid of life. A lover crossing her path, opens up vistas of sheer earthy joy, and seems for the time to be the answer to her restlessness. But a second time she has made a mistake, and suffers the bitter humiliation of discovering that she is sharing her lover with her closest friend. The only outlet for her emotions seems to be the companionship of other women (to whom she turns indeed with utmost appreciation), an apartment in London, and work. This for a woman deeply sensuous, responsive to all the calls of nature, revelling in the fields and woods like a Dryad, content to live in a thatched cottage where she can enjoy her food, her sleep, and her man.

In Valentine and her two friends one feels the same discontent that tarnishes the spirit of the young women in Burpenfield House, of "Angel Pavement." Men as real companions they cannot find. Love affairs become only flashes of excitement which leave life more drab when they are over. Work is the only solution—work that keeps their days filled and tires them into sleep at night—work that in Miss Taylor's Valentine at least, is only an escape.

## Sowing Wild Oats at Fifty

FESTIVAL. By STRUTHERS BURT. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1931. $2.50.

Reviewed by STANLEY WENT

MR. BURT starts bravely with a good idea: How is an American business man ever to enjoy life? Or can he, outside of his business? The sense of victory over antagonistic forces and the resultant consciousness of power were the satisfactions of the pioneering age in American industry, when its captains died with their boots on and asked for nothing better. That was all very well when the world was young, but how about it now when people have got more urbane, more "civilized?" And especially how about it in the case of the man of fifty who is young enough to have been affected by, though he may not share, the upsetting post-war ideas of the younger generation?

There are obvious possibilities here, especially in the character of the man who finds it difficult to realize at fifty that youth is gone. What Mr. Burt evidently intends to give us is the picture of a man who has exhibited sufficient practical business genius to amass a large fortune by middle life, but has retained some of the dreams of his boyhood and a keen intellectual curiosity which his years of money-making have left undulled—a man who, impatiently throwing off the shackles of business, is determined, now that he has the time, to inquire into the meaning of life, to see if there is not something fine in it that he has heretofore missed. This, one must believe, is at any rate something like the picture that Mr. Burt had in mind. What he actually gives us, in his hero and in all the other characters, is a set of ventriloquist's dummies disposed about a stage with Mr. Burt himself pulling the strings that make their mouths move.

Dorn Griffiths at fifty, just retired from the banking business, is an indeterminate sort of person who never seems to know his own mind and goes around in vague bewilderment about life and his own place in it. Incidentally, one learns that he was never particularly interested in the banking business, and how under these circumstances, starting as a poor boy, he contrived to amass several million dollars at it is difficult to see. At any rate, having retired with the comfort of an excessive fortune and nothing in particular to do, Dorn has a vague feeling that he has missed something in his married life and has not made up for it in a platonically sentimental friendship of twenty years' standing. He thinks now that he would like to escape the social and political ambitions of his wife and cultivate a garden, but on discovering, with polite embarrassment, that his daughter, who is married to an Italian count, has been having an affair with a young architect in New York, he goes back to Italy to hold her hand while she is making up her mind what to do. After an absurd attempt to convert his twenty-year old platonic attachment into something more thrilling, he accepts from the President, who bears a strong likeness to Mr. Hoover and is the most plausible character in the book, the post of ambassador to Italy.

Here then is the story of an attempt to sow wild oats at fifty. It ought to have been a good story and an interesting one, and there is no doubt about the moral—it is the Christian ethic of self-forgetfulness, that one must lose one's life to save it. But the moral is preached rather than pointed, and Mr. Burt utterly fails to clothe any of his characters in flesh and blood. The result, especially in view of the author's reputation, is a dull and disappointing book.

## "Mood, Magic, and Murder"

MARIO AND THE MAGICIAN. By THOMAS MANN. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1931.

Reviewed by WILLIAM LEON SMYSER

THOMAS MANN has once again adventured into the land of the evil eye. Whenever he takes a hero down to Italy, the blue fades and one shivers in an altered sunlight. Implacable is his quarrel with the southland. Perhaps, allied in natural ism with certain modern Frenchmen, he has also allied himself with them *en matières politiques*. Perhaps he has carried his Hanseatic affinities from life into literature. Certainly "Mario and the Magician" is almost the typical Anglo-Saxon travel book—a record of unpleasantness abroad.

Thomas Mann, the Nobel Prize winner, might be reconstructed from this fragment. Though the tale is but a long short story in the form that its author affects when not engaged with a "Buddenbrooks" or a "Magic Mountain," he has deployed in its 140 pages all his technique and most of his philosophy. Humor was stilled in his post-war collection, "Children and Fools." Humor and irony, however, revive with "Mario," for both grow naturally from that close and exhaustive observation which is Mann's characteristic. "Mario" has his sanity of thought, his vagaries of passion. He is not sure that instincts and their civilized refinements need be clean. He doubts, indeed, if justice oftener condemns the guilty than the innocent. Of all modern Germans who have had the opportunity, he best carries the spirit of *Realpolitik* into fiction. He is objective, *sächlich*.

Mann's skill is to evoke emotions with a nothing. In the last moment of "Mario" there is a murder, and yet . . . since in art so much depends upon how the trigger is pulled . . . one is concerned here less with plot than with atmosphere. A German family arrives at Torre di Venere. One of the children whoops. A princess states that either they must leave, or she. Doctors protest that in the child's present state all danger of contagion is past, but snobbery conquers science, and the hotel bundles them off without even permitting the princess to learn that her fears have been groundless and her gesture absurd. Thus runs the course of the vacation. The little girl takes off her bathing suit to rinse it, and is arrested. Somehow the imposition of a fine seems more indecent than the child's offense. The visitors will indeed be fortunate to get out of this narrow little watering place without catastrophe. Comes the announcement of a travelling magician, and all the hamlet, tourists and natives alike, flock to his show.

It is Cipolla, the magician, who is murdered. I find myself condoning the deed. The author has made him personify, in his demoniac spirit, all that is wrong with Torre di Venere. Real hero of the tale, he is as grotesque a figure as any of those others, Kesselmeyer, Freidemann, Piepsam, Mindernickel, for whose existence we are indebted to Mann's gothic imagination. He is all that is baleful . . . chicanery, jingoism, lust. To the first member of his audience who doubts his will power, he gives hypnotic cramps and colic. He stiffens out another across two chairs and sits on him. He bares the soul of little Signora Angiolieri. Finally, he dupes poor love-lorn Mario, who, until this moment has hardly entered the tale at all, into believing that he is the girl for whom Mario pines, and thus wins from him a shameful kiss . . . in public. Who can object when the boy suddenly becomes an instrument of Nemesis and shoots him down?

Surely not Thomas Mann. We have stifled in Torre di Venere merely for the relief of that shot. The author, with all the banal stuff of fiction at his elbow—Mario's good-hearted, fruitless love, his rival and the lady—has renounced them. The lady does not even appear. She is but a name, the rival, but a laugh which reverberates at the moment of Mario's humiliation. Melodrama there is none. Mann, when he might stir passion, is content to rouse suspense through curiosity. He remains the intellectual dealing with moods which in all honesty he can only present as repulsive. Never has his form been more remote from that of his early model, Maupassant. Never has his mental approach been nearer. If Breughel the Elder had painted in Italy, he might have assembled on canvas some such grotesquery as "Mario and the Magician."

*Della Fox Jefferson de Angelis and Lillian Russell in "The Wedding Day"*

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# Round about Parnassus

By William Rose Benét

ONE of the most peculiar poems we have read for sometime is James Whaler's *"Green River, A Poem for Rafinesque."* You will immediately ask who Rafinesque was. We can assure you we hadn't the slightest idea ourself before we read Mr. Whaler's poem. We may possibly be ahead of time in our mention of this book, which is published by Harcourt, Brace, as we have read the poem in galleys. Nevertheless it is by all odds the most outstanding poetry that has come under our eye this week, and we feel we should treat of it now.

Constantine Rafinesque, it seems, was a Sicilian-American naturalist who "died in a lonely garret on lower Race Street, Philadelphia. His great fields were botany and icthyology. Mr. Whaler's long narrative poem fills in his early life through the imagination and takes him in the latter part of the narrative through an exciting if improbable discovery of an entire lost race in a great cave like the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky, where one of the chambers is actually called Rafinesque Hall. There is also a Rafinesque's Cave in Hart County.

The name of the poem, "Green River," is given by the Green River region in Kentucky, where there are still "memorials of Rafinesque wanderings." At the moment we cannot recall another long poem based on the life of a naturalist of genius. It is the kind of life Browning might have put in a narrative, though Browning would have handled the situation between the original wife and husband with more subtlety and less melodrama. Nevertheless, Mr. Whaler has taken full advantage of the dramatic possibilities of the naturalist's meeting with and eventual marriage to the daughter of a Greek innkeeper who was bound to become unfaithful to a husband always absenting himself on scientific exploration. Rafinesque then came to America with his life in ruins. For a quarter of a century he experienced bad luck in this country, finally died, and was buried in the potter's field. His story is told by dialogue and by his own narration in friendly conversation.

"Green River" has much merit. It fulfils to a certain extent the promise of Mr. Whaler's first book. It is mainly in decasyllabic couplets. The phrase and epithet often lack freshness, but the scheme of the poem is highly original and, considering that the subject is mainly merely a curious one, the poet manages to draw on the reader's interest very well. Sometimes the conversation seems stilted, but we are dealing with a man who died in 1840, and Mr. Whaler has endeavored to reproduce the manner of speech of that time.

It is in his crises that Mr. Whaler's imagination, taking fire, deals in an impressionism that quickens the pulse of the poem. The early descriptions of Rafinesque's infatuation with the Greek girl and the struggle between him and his false friend are very good. The detail of a naturalist's life, the Sicilian scene, all the materials in which he has worked out his story, seem to be most familiar to Mr. Whaler. He has done his documenting with verisimilitude. He has drawn a convincing portrait.

There is nothing obscure about the story he tells. We should say that the defect of the poem is merely that of style. Its style seems to be but half-formed. But we welcome a poet who essays long narrative. He has done considerably better with it than the average run.

Fowler Wright, that astonishing Wellsian romancer who gave us "Deluge," is also a poet and a publisher of poetry. Before us are eight small green volumes uniform in size and format, chiefly by women, all containing rather slight lyrical matter. In case you are interested, the address of the publisher is St. George's Hall, Little Russell Street, London, W.C.1. Three of the women poets seem to be Americans. The verse of Isabel Fiske Conant is now well known in this country, and hers is one of the volumes. Then there are *"Cape Cod Woman and Other Poems"* by Ethel Ericson, and *"Homing"* by Caroline Hazard. Though the last is an American, her verse, which has charm, is entirely concerned with England. Of these three women we feel that Mrs. Conant, though hers is not often finished verse, is the most original. Her fancy is interesting. The others do rather more obvious things. Mr. Clarence L. Peaslee, the only man represented, also seems to be an American, but we regret to say that his offering in *"Tomorrow"* is rather inferior to the work of any of the women.

The poems of Claude Colleer Abbott, *"Ploughed Earth,"* which he dedicates to Geoffrey Chaucer and which Richard R. Smith publishes over here, have a certain virtue in their simplicity. Here, for instance, is a short poem in bucolic vernacular that is highly natural:

*SAMSON'S CATCH*

*Binder's sleep in barn be ended,*
*Sails are set, canvases mended,*
*The rusty scythes are whetted and ground,*
*Main time it be to start cutting round;*
*Lumbor winter oats be shaling,*
*Wheat's a picture, barley's failing.*
*Master and we in cart lodge shade*
*Handselled the bargain for harvest wage.*
*Patchy and Luke are busy a-brewing*
*Beer on the green for we a-stewing.*
*There's drink and victles and work to spare*
*Now harvest's here; come up, old mare!*

Mr. Abbott has one most haunting poem about some madhouse inmates watching a cricket match, and poems like "Philip's Song" and "Hounds of Air" are well worth reading. Perhaps "Sheepcotes," for its convincing description, is one of Mr. Abbott's most successful poems:

*Goldfinches glitter round white thistle heads,*
*Kestrel and sparrow-hawk swoop to their prey;*
*With rasping chatter flees that cunning scold*
*the bravely-feathered jay.*

In these poems of the countryside there is a little of the magic that Masefield has brought to his.

Ernest Hartsock is head of The Bozard Press, Box 67, Sta. E., Atlanta, Georgia, and publishes poetry. He is also a poet himself. His most recent book was *"Strange Splendor,"* published last fall, successor to two others, "Romance and Stardust" and "Narcissus and Iscariot." At his best he is very good, original and interesting, as in the poem "Magnet," which we clipped from a magazine some time ago to keep in our scrapbook. A taste of best phrasing may be given in "Crow":

*There is no parson quite so good*
*At exegetic platitude*
*As this black vicar of the wood*
*Who clears his dry asthmatic throat*
*And by ecclesiastic rote*
*Harps on his lone eclectic note,*
*Part Hamlet, part Polonius,*
*A frock-coat full of brass and fuss.*
*And though from pulpit in a pine*
*He never drops a chance to shine,*
*They say who know this solemn bird*
*(Like other monks of whom we've heard)*
*The sins he feels he must condemn*
*He practises by stratagem:*
*A transitory hypocrite,*
*He robs the cornfield bit by bit,*
*And waxes very plump by it.*

Mr. Hartsock has made a good start and with a good deal of self-discipline in his verse he may accomplish much.

Henry Harrison, of 27 East 7th Street, is an indefatigable publisher of poetry. There are no less than eight separate volumes before us from his press. The *"Selected Poems of Benjamin Musser"* are perhaps the most important of these, but why, oh why were they printed on pink paper? Mr. Musser is no amateur at versification, and his observation is often curious and humorous. For all that he remains a minor poet who does not sufficiently impress with any one poem. Of the other books the most interesting is Charles Beghtol's *"The Little Blue Flute,"* written by one who has known and lived with the American Indians. He knows the Hopis. His book consists of a long narrative and some shorter poems, all adaptations of Hopi poetry and ritual. They are genuine. The other books from Mr. Harrison's publishing house that we now must gently lower into the discard are for the most part fairly adequately written but are leagues from being that wild splendor that is real poetry.

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The Right Rev. William Francis Barry, scholar theologian and biographer, who died some weeks ago at Oxford, although active in discharging the duties of his parishes, was able to achieve a distinguished position as the chief quarterly writer of his generation. Since 1875 the *Dublin Review* was seldom without an article by him. Between 1889 and 1900 he contributed to every number of the quarterly.

The *Edinburgh* and *Nineteenth Century* quarterlies were also open to him. He may in addition be said to have created the English Catholic novel. His greatest influence was wielded through such philosophical biographies as those he wrote of Newman and Renan.


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# Points of View

## Anonymous Reviewing

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
SIR:

Your interesting leader, Reluctant Reviewers, invites American reviewers to speak out more frankly, but at the same time enumerates some of the considerations which will prevent the timid, peace-loving intellectual from responding to your invitation. Have you not overlooked the chief obstacle to truth-telling in reviews? The editor may welcome a discriminating frankness, the public or the clique of his more ardent admirers will not tolerate anything but unqualified laudation of any writer who has won their favor. A communication in your own columns wittily ridiculed me for having ventured to mention in a review one or two mistranslations in the book of a popular favorite. Another entirely courteous but frank, true, and specific criticism published in another New York weekly was met by a flood of extravagantly laudatory reviews of the same book and condemned in conversation as true but improper. From another review in which I deprecated what seems to a classicist a modern misuse of the word humanism, a lady actually inferred that I would be unwilling to meet socially any of my very good and greatly respected friends, the so-called humanists.

No reviewer who values his peace of mind and who is not resigned to be overwhelmed with abuse instead of reasons will dare to criticise frankly not the persons but even the published writings of Mr. H. G. Wells, Mr. Bernard Shaw, Professor Gilbert Murray, Miss Jane Addams, and Mr. George Santayana, to mention at random a few of the most brilliant illustrations of my thesis. Mr. Santayana will serve as a test case both of your tolerance and that of the lesser but very articulate public of his followers. He is a genuine poet. His prose style is in its way beautiful. But the effect is achieved by the temperate use of pretty but question-begging imagery and by an evasive use of dainty abstractions so equivocal that his admirers cannot define his meaning and a critic cannot hold him responsible for his interpretations of the history of philosophy and the philosophy of history. The tenuity and ambiguity of his thought will surprise any reader who will resolutely undertake to express in plain, unequivocal language the meaning, for instance, of the article on The Appeal to the Supernatural. It means, to put it bluntly, that he wishes to eat the cake of idealism and have it too.

There is one other meaning on which even my frankness can only touch lightly. Mr. Santayana was obviously displeased by American life and does not like America. The in its unwarranted extension quite meaningless *cliché*, "the genteel tradition," is itself evidence of that. So is the attribution to those with whom he disagrees of the phrase "that loose, low creature, Walt Whitman."

All reviewers commend the urbanity of Mr. Santayana's style. Do you really think that sneering irony, however delicately expressed, is more urbane than the frank intellectual trenchancy that raises specific issues and presents a definite challenge?

PAUL SHOREY.

Chicago, Ill.

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review:*
Sir:

Anonymous criticisms? Spare us that, Mr. Editor, please! Even if it means that a few bad books do go unwhipped! We are not so dumb that we can't spot the rotten apples to the extent of letting 'em alone. There's nothing to be gained by shying them up against the barn door.

How do you expect us to use any discrimination of our own (provided we have any, of course) when we don't know any more than anonymity tells us? And it makes a difference (to me at any rate) whether the standards applied to a book were the standards, say, of Sinclair Lewis, or those of Henry Van Dyke. Or of Earnest Elmo Calkins and Stuart Chase.

I am not "clamoring for names and distinctions," but for information, sources, citations, qualifications of witnesses. A "greater frankness of individual opinion" is perhaps desirable, but to my misguided mind at least, opinion under the cloak of anonymity simply ceases to be individual. If it may be "anybody" it might almost as well be nobody.

I may be quite wrong about it, but it seems to me that the *Review* has attained to its enviable position of dignity very largely because it has demonstrated the ability to choose authorities wisely, and to enlist their interest and coöperation. Perhaps it could have done the same if its contributors had remained anonymous; but I seriously doubt it. I doubt very much if it can maintain its position by a reversal of policy. At least I know one reader to whom its usefulness would be very greatly impaired.

ROY W. JOHNSON.

New Rochelle, N. Y.

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review:*
SIR:

For my own part, I should dislike very much to have the reviewer's name withheld. If editors were to keep alive the ideal described in the *Saturday Review* editorial of January 10, there would be greater demand for dependable reviews. An *occasional editor's dissenting footnote* would help, too.

OSCAR L. SIMPSON.

Nashville, Tenn.

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review:*
Sir:

Apropos of "Reluctant Reviewers," did you ever hear that "the American Historical Association was founded to enable the writers of histories to meet and become acquainted with (and perhaps drink a glass of beer with) the reviewers of histories"? There is a widespread opinion in the Guild that reviews appearing in the *American Historical Review* are too amiable, and that reviews of French and German and English works are more searching than reviews of American books. This for what it is worth.

A HISTORIAN.

We quote the following from the *Princeton University Press Almanac* for February:

*The Saturday Review of Literature* in its issue of January 10 complains that "when there is need for frank and honest speaking" on the part of book reviewers, "something restrains them." *The Saturday Review* asks whether anonymity would help this "vice" of book reviewing, and whether that fraction of the American public which reads book reviews would be willing to accept the authority of the journal publishing a review, instead of clamoring for the name and distinctions of the reviewer.

This question is particularly interesting to us, not only because the *Almanac* made a plea for anonymous book reviews some years ago, but because, in answer to our plea, the editor of *The Saturday Review* wrote in to say we were "all wet."

There are dangers of anonymity, of course, but it is to be presumed that reputable Reviews would engage the services of reputable reviewers, and after all an editor has rights which can be exercised whenever he suspects anything is wrong. Further, an editor must, in the last analysis, accept responsibility for the material in his columns, whether it is signed or appears anonymously.

Signed reviews, it seems to us, give the reviewer too great an opportunity to air his own personal opinions. Most books are reviewed by some man interested in the particular field the book covers. That is all right. The trouble is few people are ever entirely agreed about books, and a known reviewer is likely to argue his own position, and in the process neglect the volume he is supposed to be reviewing. If he is reticent, we suspect his reticency may sometimes be due to fear that he is not on particularly safe ground.

Personally, we should much prefer the opinion of *The Saturday Review of Literature* to that of Roscoe Whosis writing in the columns of that excellent periodical. We believe it would carry more weight, just as an unsigned editorial in *The New York Times* carries more weight than a signed expression of opinion from some individual in a neighboring column. We should take it for granted that a good Review would have only good reviewers on its staff. An anonymous book review, sponsored by a reputable Review, would be a responsible review, it seems to us. In our opinion there are too many Pollyannas and Smart Alecs writing book reviews nowadays. Practically all of them are straining a bit too hard to appear clever and erudite, and frequently at some other person's expense, the easiest and cheapest method yet devised. We should like to see publishers quoting *The Saturday Review of Literature*, *The New York Times*, *Books*, and *The Atlantic Monthly* in their advertising, rather than,—well, everyone knows their names. Book reviewing, in our humble opinion, is a dignified, honorable, and exceedingly important profession. Sometimes we wonder if, as it is now constituted, it is not in danger of becoming a racket.

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# The New Books

The books listed by title only in the classified list below are noted here as received. Many of them will be reviewed later.

## Belles Lettres

**EGIL'S SAGA done into English out of the Icelandic, with an introduction, notes, and an essay of some principles of translation. By E. R. EDDISON. Cambridge University Press (Macmillan). 1930.**

Egla is one of the great sagas; only Njala is markedly better, and that only in spots. We have long had the latter in English dress, and now Mr. Eddison gives us the Egil's saga in a translation which we, for one, find altogether delightful. He has filled a great gap, and we owe him much. Not that everybody will like his methods. Mr. H. C. Wyld has recently condemned in the most vigorous terms the diction of the Morris school of translators, who, he says, produce "an effect at once strange and ludicrous, a version from which the poetry of the original has vanished, and whose meaning is often quite unintelligible to a reader not possessing a good knowledge of Old English poetry." This criticism, directed at modern English versions of Beowulf, applies just as well (or ill) to translations from Old Icelandic, and Wyld would hardly approve of Mr. Eddison's version of Egla, for Mr. Eddison is most emphatically of the school of Morris. But the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and however strongly one may condemn, in theory, the use of archaisms and the like, it would be hard to put theory to practice in Mr. Eddison's case: he has done too good a job! Besides, it is one thing to object to excessive use of archaisms and quite another to admit no archaic diction at all. Dogmatism and absolutism in such matters can only be deplored, and many of us will be grateful to Mr. Eddison for his "terminal essay," in which he defends with vigor and point the method which he has made his own. His translation is indeed close to the original, both in letter and in spirit, and of a translation what could be higher praise?

## History

THE FIGHTING KINGS OF WESSEX. By G. P. BAKER. Dodd, Mead. 1931. $4.

Mr. Baker depends chiefly upon secondary sources, but his annotations show careful study, and this book, like his earlier "Hannibal," demonstrates his ability to write with scope and penetration as well as with power of interesting his reader. This book, although ostensibly a history of the English kings from Alfred to Harold, begins with a most valuable study of the obscure history of Britain from the end of the Roman period to Alfred, which indicates more lucidly than any available book for the general reader the place and importance of early English history in the general break-up of the western Roman Empire. The book is particularly interesting in its study of British and Anglo-Saxon relationship where recent investigations as to the wide survival of British stock have been most intelligently used. Mr. Baker is also particularly successful in indicating the general character of the conflicting cultures: Roman, Celtic, Saxon, Danish, and Norman. In spite of the grumbling of research historians bred in late 19th century tradition, one of the most valuable features of recent historical publication is the appearance of books like this one which summarize for the general reader the significance of painfully acquired detail which in special studies does not reveal its importance. It is quite probable that many of Mr. Baker's theories are disputable, but on the whole this seems to be a sound as well as a very illuminating work and of much broader interest than its title would indicate.

## Juvenile

TURN AGAIN TALES. By LAURENCE HOUSMAN. Henry Holt. 1930. $2.50.

With whimsical ingenuity, a clever mind here juggles with fairy tale themes against a background of laboratory science and psychiatry. "What the Professor wanted to do was to discover the fairy's density, solubility, specific gravity, atomic structure, reaction to changes of temperature, chemical and atmospheric environment, and the various dynamic forces of which electricity in its various forms is one"; ". . . a frightful explosion took place with a thoroughness which in its results suggested far less a blind mechanical agency, expending itself with centrifugal force on its surroundings, than a consciously malevolent will beautifully avenging itself. . . ." Could theme or language be farther removed from the comprehension or enjoyment of the child of fairy tale age? This is the humorous imagination of the sophisticated, the amused use of modernity by the adult, playing at being young again.

Some of the stories, however, have natural humor, tenderness, and grace. When Mr. Housman ceases to be clever and is content to take the old path to the heart of the unchanging child, he is easy, graceful, sincere. The children will quickly discover the good stories.

The illustrations are unusually true to the text and are delightful to the eye. The volume, like most modern books for children, is too large and too heavy for the child to handle easily.

SKYCRAFT. By AUGUSTUS POST. Oxford. 1930. $3.50.

The boy who is itching to get his fingers on the controls will find in "Skycraft" a readable and thorough primer. It is a book of general information on aircraft and the art of flying; an ensemble of material that is accurate, beautifully simple, and comprehensive. There is a touch of history, the rudiments of airodynamics, brief descriptions of the parts and types of lighter- and heavier-than-aircrafts, something about motors and instruments. The chapter on "How to Fly" is a good description of the student pilot's first hours in the air, when he can know so little that all he needs to know can be included in a few pages. The merit of the book lies in its omission of complications that would bore, puzzle, or petrify the young beginner. On the subject of parachute jumping, the author, who has evidently done considerable himself, is nonchalant and claims that there is nothing to it at all. He pulls the cord on the count of five instead of the traditional ten, although he once dropped twelve hundred feet before opning his 'chute, just for the fun of it, one is left to infer. The diagrams are considerable, are to the point, comprehensible, and not obscured behind a spider web of dotted lines. You don't need a microscope to read the labels and not every known fact in aviation is crammed into one page.

(*Continued on next page*)

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# The New Books

## Juvenile

(*Continued from preceding page*)

JOBS FOR GIRLS. By HAZEL RAWSON CADES. Harcourt, Brace. 1930. $2.

If you are interested in books to give to a girl who is beginning to think about what work she shall enter—or to one you wish would think about it—"Jobs for Girls" is well worth your consideration. For Miss Cades knows girls. As editor of the Twelve to Twenty pages of the *Woman's Home Companion*, she is in touch with many hundreds of them. And in the writing of this book she has drawn not only from her knowledge of the personal problems and desires of girls, but from her own significant experiences and contacts in the world of affairs as well.

In selecting twenty-two fields of work which hold opportunities for young women, she has carefully chosen a variety which are of interest to girls of contrasting talents and interests. And to a description of the opportunities in these fields, she adds practical suggestion and observation, much of it presented in the actual words of women of achievement in each. "Getting a Job," "Keeping a Job," "Dollars and Sense in Clothes," "Are There Too Many Nurses?" "Book Lovers' Business" are typical among her chapter titles.

We like Miss Cades's frank approach. She tells what special training is necessary, what is optional. There are difficulties and obstacles everywhere. She does not wave them aside. And without effervescence, she describes the fascinations to be found along the way and the personal satisfactions which a girl may conceivably find.

And we like especially her informal style. The same touch of intimacy and practicality and appreciation of the individual girl's problems which made girls welcome Miss Cades's first book, "Any Girl Can Be Good-looking," is to be found here.

We cannot but regret, however, that Miss Cades's first chapters have more of a text-book flavor than any of her others. Her analysis in the opening chapter, "Are you looking for a job?" is thorough and practical—but a list of questions which a girl should ask concerning herself and what she wishes to do is not calculated to catch the interest of a girl unless she happens to be concerned with just that—looking for a job. And one cannot but feel that if, instead of this opening, Miss Cades could have used some of the vivid narrative material in which her book abounds, she would have assured for it a wider audience.

ANIMAL'S OWN STORY BOOK. By ELLEN C. BABBITT. Century. 1930. $1.50.

Despite Miss Babbitt's undoubted success in her previous work with folk tales, we think this latest book of only mediocre worth. Perhaps it is the difference in content between American and Hindu lore that makes "The Animal's Own Story Book" seem thin and pointless in contrast with the "Jataka Tales." Certainly there is no fault to be found with the English, clear, simple, direct. All the traditional ingredients of a good rendering of folk tales are here; all, that is, except the final spark that gives them life.

Perhaps an honest compiler with respect for her sources is not to be blamed if a story goes off in smoke, has no particular point, brings in extraneous elements. Surely she is not to blame, but we must hold her responsible for claiming that the stories are worth our attention in the first place. And perhaps they are. Certainly they will not hurt your child. Possibly they will give him pleasure. But they are not the real thing, full of flavor and conviction, that one hopes to find in the traditional beliefs and superstitions of one's native land. They are tame, adequate reading matter for second and third grade children, better adapted in format to being read to the child than by him, since the type is rather small and closely spaced. Margery Stocking has done some attractive silhouette illustrations, the book is well made and not expensive, but we cannot recommend it with any genuine enthusiasm.

SUN-UP ON THE RANGE. By FREDERIC NELSON LITTEN. Illustrated by ALBIN HENNING. Appleton. 1930. $2.

This story for boys goes right ahead with no lost motion. The action centers around the Circle ML cattle ranch in the Dragoon Mountains country of Arizona down near the Mexican border. Martin and Barney Lane own the ranch and also operate a mine out in the hills. Both Mexicans and Americans interfere with the Lane prosperity. The cattle disappear, revolutionary bandits raid the ranch premises, and owing to the loss of the cattle and the delay in the mine production a mortgage is about to be foreclosed.

The two brothers put up a courageous fight to keep their holdings. A rather large number of personages take part in the struggles. The entire ensemble, of characters and settings, is an excellent piece of work and thoroughly Arizona. And the action never flags, the plot is devious but well sustained, and if at the end, where the brothers win out, the author appears to tire out just a trifle, the reader will have had full value for time or money spent, regardless. But—"Buenas dias" instead of "Buenos días," Mr. Litten? "Malo hombres" instead of "malos hombres," sir? Let us serve the American youth with good Spanish, even border Spanish, as well as with good writing.

THE HEROES. By CHARLES KINGSLEY. Illustrated by HELEN H. KIHM. McBride, 1930. $2.50.

The Victorians had their enthusiasms, but they always colored them to fit their moral precepts. They dictated to the past as dogmatically as to their own epoch. If Charles Kingsley chose to write about early Spanish America or ancient Greece, he did it with a conscience. In this book he is specifically rewriting the old Greek legends to make suitable reading for his children. He calls it "The Heroes" "because that was the name the Hellenes gave to men who were brave and skilful and dare do more than other men." That is true and sound, but he cannot leave it there. He must point his moral and so his final result is always thoroughly un-Greek except as to the actual facts.

Even with these he has a way of sidestepping difficulties that he cannot explain, which is as exasperating to us as it would have been to a Greek. Our children surely will have little patience with a story teller who refuses to tell to the end what he has begun. The attempt to make the primitive vigor of these legends fit in with the Victorian conception of morality must seem forced even to a child.

The amazement is that the stories remain fascinating in spite of their coating. There is a glorious vitality about them that cannot be downed, and Kingsley knew and loved his Greek language. His prose is always musical and is often beautifully suggestive of the original Greek:

> and behold, instead of falling, he floated and stood and ran along the sky. He looked back, but Athens had vanished, and Hermes; and the sandals led him on northward ever, like a crane who follows the spring toward the Ister fens.

The story of Perseus is perhaps the most successful because it is more adaptable material for children. The book is well printed and illustrated, and its glorious epic material survives on the whole being "done over" in red plush.

THISTLE INN. By KATHARINE ADAMS. Macmillan. 1930. $2.

Miss Adams's books for girls have been popular because of a certain spontaneity and liveliness in the young people in them. They have been stories in which young people abound, young people of different countries meeting and forming friendships against an Old World background, France, England, Sweden, and Ireland. This latest one is somewhat different. It is of Scotland at the time of the return of young Charles Stuart, Bonnie Prince Charlie. Three young people of the story are earnest advocates of the lost cause and strong hero worshippers. These are Cherry, a will-o'-the-wisp of a girl who, in boy's clothes, carries messages hither and yon and is in the thick (nowhere very thick) of the undertaking; Elspeth, who is "marked for service" in a mysterious way, and her young boy cousin Glenfinnan, who enlists with the young prince and gives such service and devotion that he is rewarded by knighthood.

To call the story in any sense historical would be absurd. The girls and young Glen are filled with a fervor and a desire "to do and dare," but the Stuart struggle is not presented clearly or fully, nor is the young prince "with gold locks flying," a vivid character strongly appealing as an object of loyalty and ardent support. If the young people know what they are doing and daring it is more than the reader does, and their seriousness and struggles result only in sentimentality. The Prince comes upon Glenfinnan on the battlefield and says to him, "You are but a bairn. How comes it that you are here?" Glenfinnan answers, "I am Glenfinnan Channing, and I am marked for your service. I have a cousin, too, a lass of sixteen, a sweet girl living in my father's house. Both of us are marked for your service. She is ready to give her life if that will help. I would have your Royal Highness know with what joy she awaits her time!" The characters are continually stirred to great emotion, but the reader looks in vain for something to fire his own enthusiasm and love of romance.

Perhaps all this lack of atmosphere and probability could be forgiven if there were an interesting plot to follow, but this also is weak and vague. When all is said and done, the book has neither depth nor richness.

## Books Briefly Described

THE ONE-WAY RIDE. By WALTER NOBLE BURNS. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1931. $2.50.

An inside story of gangs and gangsters with especial emphasis on the biographies of notorious bootleggers and gunmen, by the author of "Billy the Kid."

LINCOLN AND HIS CABINET. By CLARENCE EDWARD MACARTNEY. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1931. $3.50.

Biographical and political studies of each member of Lincoln's Cabinet with an extensive index and evidently based on research.

ZEPPELIN: A BIOGRAPHY. By MARGARET GOLDSMITH. New York: William Morrow & Co. 1931. $3.50.

A readable biography of Zeppelin which recounts not merely his experience as an inventor, but also gives many interesting sidelights, such as his ideas as to the use of Zeppelins in war. It reveals that his first experience in the air was gained in 1863, when he came to the United States to join the Union Army.

BLISS CARMAN AND THE LITERARY CURRENTS AND INFLUENCES OF HIS TIME. By JAMES CAPPON. New York: Lewis Carrier & Alan Isles. 1931. $3.50.

A biographical and critical study of Bliss Carman combined with literary essays having more or less relation to the literary tradition for which he stood.

THE COURSE OF EMPIRE.. Edited by VALESKA BARI. New York: Coward-McCann. 1931. $4.

An interesting collection of first-hand accounts of the Gold Rush and California of that period, with a historical introduction. The whole done for the general reader and indeed very readable.

GARDENER OF EVIL: A Portrait of Baudelaire and His Times. By PIERRE LOVING. New York: Brewer & Warren. 1931. $2.50.

A ficitionized biography of Baudelaire based upon known facts but written in the form of a novel.


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"Some months have passed since I found Sir James Jeans' book, *The Universe Around Us*, of such superlative interest that I was impelled to say something about it... His later and briefer book appeals to me no less strongly."—*Boston Transcript* $2.25

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A novel approach to Italy, and one which must be useful to any who contemplate a trip abroad, as well as to all those for whom the history of civilization has a meaning. *Illus.* $5.00

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*By George T. Starnes*

A sound investigation of the history of banking in Virginia, based on thorough research in original records. $2.00

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# The Reader's Guide

By MAY LAMBERTON BECKER

Inquiries in regard to the selection of books and questions of like nature should be addressed to MRS. BECKER c/o *The Saturday Review*

*E. S. K., Middletown, N. Y., who is interested in stories of ancient Egypt, asks if anything by Georg Ebers is still in print.*

THE "Complete Works" of Ebers, in ten volumes, are published by Bigelow, Brown and Co. His best-known works, "Warda," "An Egyptian Princess," and "Homo Sum" are in the inexpensive Home Library (Burt); I have a vivid impression of the first two, and it is years since I saw a copy: the plots are not especially notable, but the archæological details, such as embalming processes and rites, have enthralled thousands even of young readers.

THE cowboy novels continue to stir up contention: *L. J. E., Honesdale, Pa.*, an old friend of this enterprise, was grieved that I could find room for Zane Grey and B. M. Bowers and overlook Knibbs and Eugene Manlove Rhodes. "E. Douglas Branch, who lately brought out 'Westward' (Appleton), also wrote an overlooked book called 'Cowboys and Their Interpreters,' and you would surely be interested in his fair play with all the essentially hack westerns, usual movies, and all the rest of the magazine and muzzy cowboy stuff, while calling attention to the sound material (spite of some hack girl occlusions) of a few, which besides Knibbs and Rhodes he found to be Andy Adams, Will James, Russell, Hough, but not the two you included. . . . Rhodes has not only human interest in believable characters, delightful humor, and often wit or irony, but optimism and lift of spirits; he can swing a plot not too sensational to be credible. And he knows his West, lives in it, as he has lived, ranching and observing, for some sixty-five years. May I again recommend to you and your suggestees these books, which are in the seventy-five cent reprints or in Houghton Mifflin lists: 'West is West,' 'Good Men and True,' 'Stepsons of Light,' 'Copper Streak Trail,' 'Once in the Saddle.' 'Bransford of Arcady' is perhaps the most delightful and out of print, so is 'Desire of the Moth' out of print and delightful."

It looks as if I had a good time coming, having as yet no experience with E. M. Rhodes. But I have read Mr. Branch's "Westward" (Appleton), having reserved for it the deck-chair peace of an ocean in October; it is a history of the American frontier in its most romantic aspects, so comprehensive that when F. T. F., Trenton, asked for a book list on this subject for the documentation of an extra fine club paper, I told her to get just this one book, and a letter lately received says that she did so with profit to the paper and high enjoyment to herself.

*D. K., Morgantown, W. Va., comes into the rodeo with these entrants:*

Mrs. Stern is right about Ogden, Seltzer, Spearman, and Sabin being perennially popular but she neglected to mention such other truer and less blatant authors as Wister, Mulford, Raine, and Packard. Owen Wister's "The Virginian" is now a classic and the model for many other western stories by the lesser lights in western fiction. B. M. Bowers's rollicking cowboy stories are harmless and light reading, but the stories of Clarence E. Mulford ring rather true to life as it was during the period of the introduction of barb wire into the west. His story, "Buck Peters-Ranchman," is clean, wholesome reading. "The Man from Bar-20" is satisfying enough for any western story reader and strangely enough has the lack of romance in its pages. "When West was West," by Wister, a recent book, is another to-be-famous classic. "The Settling of the Sage" is a story that deals with the days of the West, the author of which I cannot recall. Who remembers "54-40 or Fight?" Cannot "The Saga of Billy the Kid" be called a western story? Billy was real, so were Tracy and the Younger Brothers, and they played a very important part in the settling of the West. Any college library has a list of books that deals with references on the West at the time of building and I'm afraid that the list would be too long to print here. "The U. P. Trail" is a more or less true to life story of the West and at a period when the railroads helped the expansion of the West. The comparatively recent book of Rolvaag about the settling of the wheat country combines romance with reality and shows what the early settlers were up against during their experiment. Hamlin Garland's "Son of the Middle Border" is portrayed by too much stark reality to make light reading for some readers, but it deals with the settling of the West.

*D. H., Stanford University,* tells *J. R. M., Princeton,* about a Shaw item for his bibliography, an M. A. Thosisby C. E. Walton, "a systematization of the Social and Ethical Philosophy of George Bernard Shaw, which is on file at the Stanford Library," whence, I imagine, it might be borrowed. Prefacing the work is a copy of a letter from Mr. Shaw to Mr. Walton in this vein (I quote from memory): . . . 'No, I did not get my idea from Lever or Bunyan. I will not help you to tomfool away your time in this fashion. . . . If you come to London . . . I shall avoid you as I would the plague'."

THE Reverend Sydney Smith, considered as a prophet, was sometimes more bright than right. Along with his famous inquiry about American books may now be placed the following dictum concerning doctors in fiction, discovered by *C. H. B., New Haven, Conn.*, in Frances Anne Kemble's "Records of Later Life" (Holt: 1884), and gratefully acknowledged by this department: she says that "in a letter written August 1, 1837, Mrs. Butler (Fanny Kemble) mentions Miss Harriet Martineau's intention to write a novel, and comments on this in a footnote—

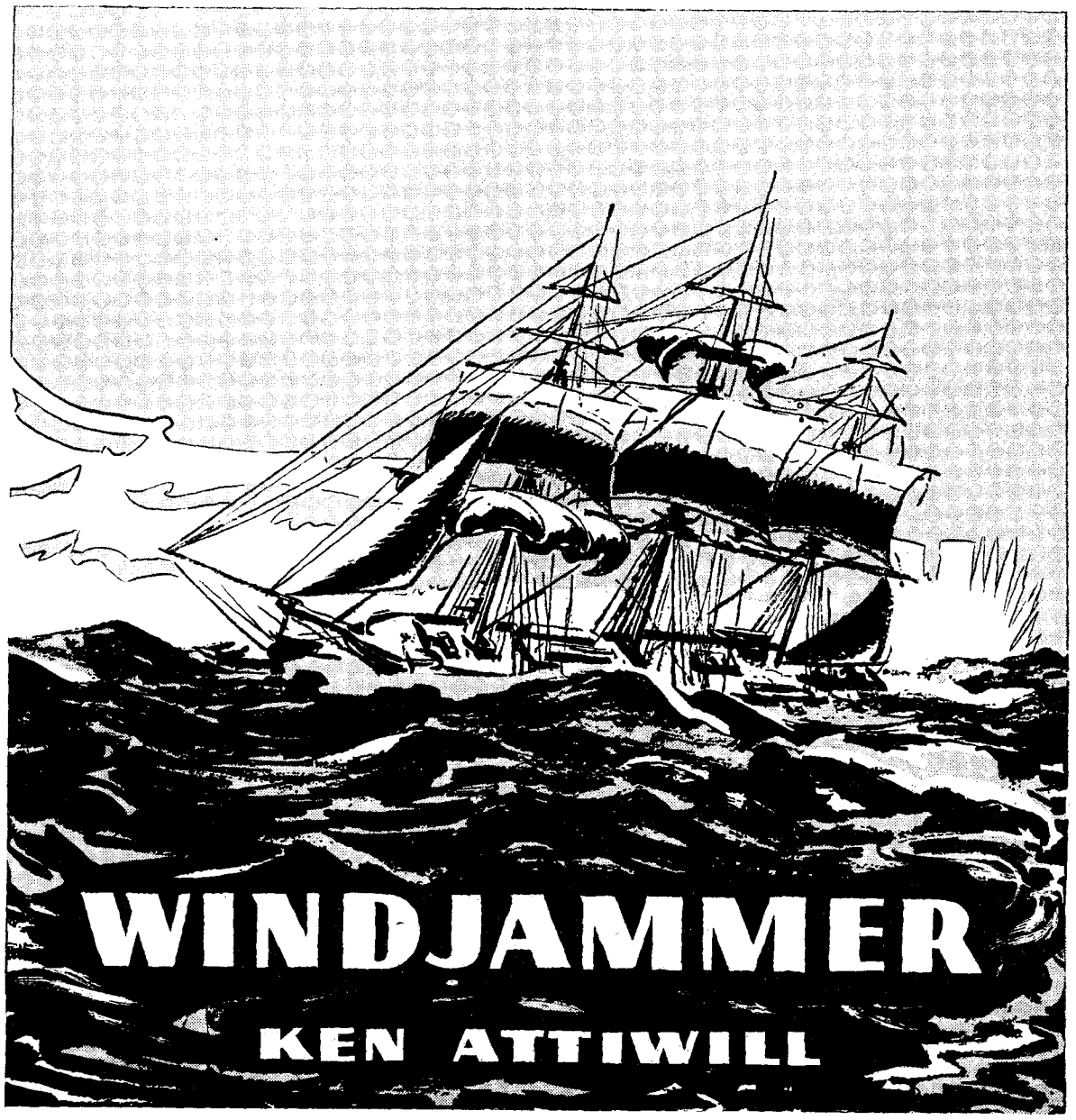
The admirable novel of "Deerbrook" sufficiently answered all who had ever doubted Miss Martineau's capacity for that order of composition, in spite of Sydney Smith's determination that no village "poticary," as he called it, might, could, or ever should, be a hero of romance, and the incessant ridicule with which he assailed the choice of such a one. If, he contended, he takes his mistress's hand with the utmost fervor of a lover, he will, by the mere force of habit, end by feeling her pulse; under strong emotion, she faints away, he will have no salts but Epsom about him, wherewith to restore her suspended vitality; he will put cream of tartar in her tea and a flower of brimstone in her bosom. There was no end to the fun he made of the "medicinal lover." Nevertheless, the public accepted the Deerbrook M.D. and all the paraphernalia of gallipots, pill-boxes, salves, ointments, with which the facetious divine always represented him as surrounded, and vindicated, by its approval, the authoress's choice of a hero.

Well, someone loves doctors in fiction, to judge by the incessant response to the lately printed list. The original inquirer has just ordered twenty additional copies of that issue, and so many indignant protests have arrived asking why Somerset Maugham's "Of Human Bondage" was not included, that a supplement must appear forthwith. *D. L., Oneida, N. Y.*, makes almost as impassioned a demand for "Mrs. Mason's Daughters"—"that strangely, strangely unmentioned novel—but *you* have mentioned it in praise"—with a doctor who "treated noses effectually, ate peas irreproachably, and had a five-year-old daughter Jane who allowed no one to talk to her when she was listening to a piano recital. He was tall and gaunt, with slightly poppy eyes and thin sarcastic lips, and Fernanda did not love him. But he was a good doctor" and he is not the only one in the book. *D. L.* also points out that the hero of Henry Handel Richardson's Australian trilogy is a doctor, and that medical matters enter into the plot; that there are two unattractive doctors in Mrs. Woolf's "The Voyage Out" and a terrifying one in "Mrs. Dalloway," and that a most lovable one is in Willa Cather's "Song of the Lark," while Dorothy Richardson's "Interim" is full of doctors and medical talk. "The group of young physicians at Miriam Henderson's boarding house are Canadians, you remember, post-graduates taking the 'Conjoint'; Miriam fell in love with von Heber; she typed for a triad of dentists and dusted volumes of *The Dental Cosmos.* In 'Deadlock' she resigned and was reinstated." *K. L.* includes some of these and adds Mrs. Belloc-Lowndes's "When No Man Pursueth," which involves a doctor's dilemma when he suspects that one of his patients is being poisoned, and J. Johnston Abraham's "The Night Nurse" so interesting a first novel it is a pity that the author (a doctor) never wrote a second."

*E. N. H., San Francisco, sometime ago heard Mrs. Patrick Campbell recite Humbert Wolfe's "Serenade," and asks in which volume of his works it may be found.*

"SERENADE" is a sequence of ten lyrics in "This Blind Rose" (Doubleday, Doran); they are so beautiful on the page—especially "Substance," "Return," "Romance," and "Let us be very sure"—that I wish I had heard them in Mrs. Campbell's beautiful voice.


"A MONUMENT TO THE AGE OF SAIL"




Most sea-farers, when they go to write, dip their pens in rhapsody. Not so Mr. Attiwill. Last year he shipped aboard a four-masted barque, one of the last old grain ships to go rounding the Horn. With him he carried all his worldly goods—£8 10s and a stout heart, all set for adventure. But even the sea can't break a good journalist of the habit of making profuse and realistic notes—such notes as form the basis for this ruthless and intimate chronicle of fo'c'sle life.

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A word of praise for the jacket, too: "No one can draw a ship better than Edward A. Wilson," says the N. Y. *Sun*.

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In response to frequent requests from librarians, from English departments in various universities, and from many of our subscribers for the names of those who, in the various fields of criticism, review the more important books for The Saturday Review, we are publishing, from a much larger list, a representative selection of our principal reviewers:

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## An Episode in Paper-Making

DIE PAPIERMÜHLE DES DON STEFANO MEROLA. By JOHANN WOLFGANG GOETHE. New York: Japan Paper Co. 1930.

THIS small pamphlet contains matter extracted from Goethe's biographical sketch of Philip Hackert, a German painter in the service of Ferdinand IV, King of Naples, in the eighteenth century. It relates how the king's minister, who was furnishing an inferior grade of paper, was outwitted, and how the superiority of the paper furnished by the Merola mill was established. The pamphlet is in German, printed in Germany, and is an unusual bit of advertising, with a bibliographical interest.

## Prose Quartos

FINE FURNITURE, by THEODORE DREISER; GEHENNA, by CONRAD AIKEN; TABLOID NEWS, by LOUIS BROMFIELD; THE AMERICAN COUNTY FAIR, by SHERWOOD ANDERSON; FEATHERS, by CARL VAN VECHTEN; THE LITTER OF ROSE LEAVES, by STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT. New York: Random House. 1930.

A YEAR or two ago Random House issued a box of verses under the title of "The Poetry Quartos"; now comes a similar box of prose, the separate titles of which are given above. The typography of each quarto is distinct, and the whole series has been printed at the Southworth Press from typographic design by Paul Johnston. The type work is excellent, and proves Mr. Johnston's skill as a printer. We commend them as good and interesting examples of sound typographic taste. R.

## Biblio-Typographica

BIBLIO-TYPOGRAPHICA, a survey of contemporary fine printing styles. By PAUL JOHNSTON. New York: Covici-Friede. 1930. $7.50.

THIS is a series of essays on the practice and the practitioners of printing, together with many reproductions of book pages by modern printers—mostly American. The letter-press is well set in leaded Baskerville, and the reproductions are rightly in line-blocks. There is an index.

The reproductions of book pages are of very considerable interest, especially if one does not have a large collection of modern books. To anyone wishing a résumé of modern book printing in this country, with an occasional glimpse of such work in Europe, the book will be worth while. Sometimes the zinc photo-engravings lack the sharpness which electrotypes would have, but it is obviously difficult or impossible to obtain electrotypes of many books. On the whole, however, the illustrations have been well printed. On the whole, also, the selection has been well done. Many of the most distinguished pages of recent years are shown, and practically all of the foremost printers are represented. Where it has been necessary to reproduce tonal effects, the offset process proves its superiority in book work.

It is unfortunate that the text of the book is not equal to the reproductions in value. It shows plainly the result of hasty preparation and is both slovenly in plan and inaccurate in statement. (The Grolier Club was founded in 1884—not 1854; Scotch "roman" and Scotch "face" are not synonymous terms.) But even more serious than these errors of fact are the absurd statements too prevalent in the book. To say that Gerard Meynell and *The Imprint* group "were destined to carry the art far beyond the limits Morris reached," or that Elmer Adler "has prevented his style being purely American by often using imported German types," is not only silly but unfair to the casual reader. And while it is quite reasonable to dislike Morris's typography, it is another thing to be obsessed with the perpetual desire to throw spit-balls at him, as Mr. Johnston does throughout the book. It is to be hoped that the casual reader will realize that the statements in this book are not always to be taken at face value. The book would have been far more valuable, and Mr. Johnston's reputation would have been saved from question, if he had confined himself to the selection of examples, where he is in general reliable and well informed. R.

## Illustrators of Children's Books

CONTEMPORARY ILLUSTRATORS OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS. Compiled by BERTHA E. MAHONEY and ELINOR WHITNEY. Boston: Bookshop for Boys and Girls. 1930.

IT should be stated first-off that the title to this book is misleading: of the one hundred and thirty-five pages, one-third are devoted to the Bewicks, Cruickshank, Doyle, Tenniel, Walter Crane, Kate Greenaway, Howard Pyle, and other artists who can scarcely be called "contemporary." The misnomer is to be regretted, for the reproductions and accounts of the elder men and women are of much interest.

The contemporary part of this book consists of short biographies and bibliographies of some hundred and fifty illustrators of children's books, with illustrations of their work in many cases. Such a list could hardly be exhaustive: but there is a supplemental list of twenty-five artists, thus making a pretty complete survey of the field. I am sorry to see omitted the name of Katharine Buffum, whose work, while small in amount, was of unusually fine quality.

The list of contemporary artists is invaluable as a guide for publishers and authors. Of somewhat less value in this respect, but of interest, are the chapters devoted to contemporary book illustration in Germany and France (with the rest of Europe unfortunately omitted), and several chapters devoted to "Past Influences." These latter are illuminating. There were giants in olden times—Pyle and Bewick and Tenniel for three—whose superior skill as draftsmen and consummate understanding of what illustration is, make the most of our modern work pale and insipid. From Bewick onward there was an overlapping of great illustrators, a succession of competent men which ends with N. C. Wyeth and Rockwell Kent. But the camera and the half-tone plate has killed the trade. All the rest are but tyroes. So far at least as England and America are concerned. It is therefore with something of regret that one views this book. It is invaluable as a handbook of contemporary American illustrators, but the best part is the record of a past eminence. R.

Attention should be called to the "Bibliography of John Masefield," compiled by Mr. Charles H. Simmons, and issued by the Columbia University Press in an edition of 750 copies. Mr. Simmons has done his work carefully and very well: his notes are brief and illuminating, and he has saved much by placing after the contents of each volume various notes on the first appearances of each poem. His book has everything to recommend it. G. M. T.

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MISS GABRIELLA PLACHT who presides over the *Beacon's* destinies was one of the first discoverers of *Hard Lines* She sent a copy to DR. S. B. ROSS, who, though the house doctor of The Roosevelt was nevertheless not immune to a cold. In response, MISS PLACHT received this letter from DR. ROSS:

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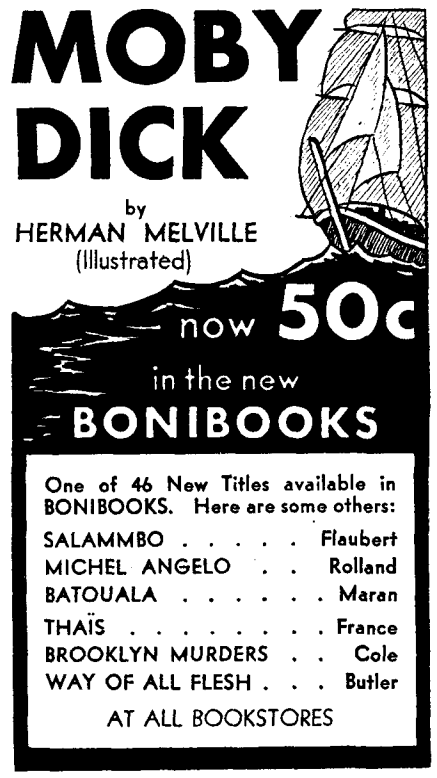
"Gratefully,
"S. B Ross"

Here at *The Inner Sanctum* we have heard of movie rights, reprint rights, serial and syndication rights, but medical rights is a new one on us. The Statistics Department is planning to go into a huddle with the good doctor. Perhaps he will make a deal on the fifth printing which is now on press.

—ESSANDESS

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WE see that *Fairfax Downey* has written a biography of that famous *Richard Burton* who translated the Arabian Nights and was one of the great adventurers of the world. It is a book on Scribners' spring list. Also on their list is a volume by the author of "Her Privates We," namely "Scenes and Portraits," by *Frederic Manning*. This is a group of re-creations of famous figures of past history, and it gave *Colonel T. E. Lawrence* the clue to the identity of "Private 19022" who originally signed "Her Privates We." . . .

Some little time ago in the first of his Enemy Pamphlets *Mr. Wyndham Lewis* made a great uproar praising and defending his own satire, "The Apes of God." The book sounds as though it were a good take-off on Bloomsbury and Chelsea except that in satirizing the Sitwells Mr. Lewis is dealing with real and not mock artists, which he does not appear to recognize. *Edith Sitwell* is one of the most considerable women poets of the day and *Osbert Sitwell* a distinguished prose-writer, while in at least one volume of poems, "England Reclaimed," he made a permanent contribution to English literature. *Sacheverell Sitwell* has also demonstrated his indubitable talents. Mr. Wyndham Lewis is a very clever writer with much power, but we don't like him particularly when he ballyhoos his own work. There is too much ego in his cosmos. Naturally one of the best letters written to him came from *W. B. Yeats*. (Wyndham Lewis has printed a lot of them, conserving all the laudation possible.) Yeats says in part, in re satire:

> Somebody tells me that you have satirized Edith Sitwell. If that is so, visionary excitement has in part benumbed your senses. When I read her "Gold Coast Customs" a year ago, I felt, as on first reading "The Apes of God," that something absent from all literature for a generation was back again, and in a form rare in the literature of all generations, passion ennobled by intensity, by endurance, by wisdom. We had it in one man once. He lies in St. Patrick's now under the greatest epitaph in history.

We wish to thank *Wilfred J. Funk* for sending us his book of amusing verses, "Manhattans, Bronxes, and Queens," illustrated by Russell Patterson and published by Robert M. McBride. . . .

We think we really should have turned over the following letter from *Kenneth Slade Alling*, which we have held for some time, to the writer of "Round about Parnassus" in another part of this journal. But as the letter begins "Dear Phoenician" we are printing it here. We do not agree with Mr. Alling because we are all for innovations in the sonnet. The only test of their worth is whether or not they do what they set out to do.

It is almost a churlish thing to react adversely to as fine a sonnet as Absolution by Arthur Davison Ficke in your issue of Dec. 20.

The reason? Let us assume for a stretched comparison that a man is an animal painter—we will say the best there is—and that he paints the massive forequarters of a lion with the mane like tawny fire—he is part way through with his project—and then to this uncompleted lion he adds the hindquarters of a tiger. Now like the lion's portion, the fragment of tiger may also be consummate painting, each in itself incapable of being bettered—but can these halves be joined?

I doubt if I am more finical than any other intensely interested reader of poetry, but to me the Shakespearian octave that has for its completion a Petrarchian sestet—is—well, much like the animal picture above.

To vary it—when I read what sets out to be a Shakespearian sonnet, my ear expects for completion a certain cadence, a movement and a chime, and then to meet with an Italian ending disappoints, for there that majestic ebbing is out of place.

If possible even worse it is to begin reading a fine sonnet on the Italian scheme and come to a couplet at the end—I can imagine no more horrid detonation.

Arthur Davison Ficke is an artist. I know his sonnets and some of them are among our best. Therefore I am the more surprised at this his lapse of artistic integrity in Absolution—which—considered only in its components is a splendid sonnet.

There is no answer at all in advancing a sonnet by Wordsworth in which he has more or less similarly sinned—some seven of his sonnets are stupendous and unequalled—any more than you can set up a certain fifteen line sonnet of Shakespeare's and conclude from this that fourteen lines in a sonnet are entirely inadequate.

How about this, Phoenician? How about a war against sonnetal monstrosities?

*Wolcott Gibbs's* "Bird Life at the Pole," published by William Morrow and supposed to be told to Gibbs by *Commander Christopher Robin*, is a parody of polar expeditions in general. All correspondence concerning this expedition has been written on bits of cloth snipped from the wings of aeroplanes in which Commander Robin did not discover the South Pole. He reached the North Pole by accident instead. A Junior League girl from Columbus, Ohio, who accompanied the expedition was, unfortunately, (or fortunately—it all depends on how you look at it!) swallowed by a whale. No further statement is being made by Commander Robin concerning the Penguin scandal at this time. Commander Robin's slogan has been "Birds gotta fly." . . .

*Vrest Orton*, at one time connected with this journal and formerly head of the Tory Press, has now established at Brattleboro, Vermont (he is a native Vermonter) in affiliation with the Vermont Printing Company, a publishing and fine book printing organization to be known as the Stephan Daye Press. The name is taken from Stephen Daye who set up the first printing establishment in what is now the United States. That was in 1638. . . .

We see that Duffield and Company are bringing out the fourteenth edition of *Robert W. Wood's* "How to Tell the Birds from the Flowers," a book whose acquaintance we originally made in San Francisco in the year of 1908 or thereabout. It is one of the most amusing books in the world, one that deserves to be ever discovered anew by each new generation. Its conception was a positive inspiration, you can look it through in almost no time, and it only costs a dollar. . . .

Which reminds us of another inspired bit of fooling, a book of drawings with rhymes by one *"Childe Harold,"* published, we think, by Paul Elder of San Francisco years ago. The real author was, of course, *Edward Salisbury Field*. And then there was *Wallace Orwin's* "Love Sonnets of a Hoodlum," and that collection of collegiate romaunts and ballads, "Poe's Run and other Poems," by *McCreedy Sykes*, celebrating among other things the whole string of single-handed—and footed—Poe victories for Princeton over Yale. And then there used to be a *Putnam* at Yale once who signed himself *"T. Put"* and got out a little pamphlet of his drawings and verses about fat little animals with fat little clouds in the offing. The lyric of his that still chimes down the halls of memory is

*This is the picture of a calf.*
*I hope that it will make you laff.*
*It is not funny—O dear no!—*
*But it is sort of foolish though.*
*Yes? No?*

It is such brochures that considerably lighten such labors as are shown forth by a cartoon of *John McCutcheon's* kindly sent us by a correspondent. It is a fearsome picture and is entitled "The Man who Tried to Keep up with the New Books."

*J. B. Priestley* has just arrived in this country. Before leaving England he completed with the addition of some finishing touches by *Edward Knoblock* a dramatization of "The Good Companions." Of it he says: "It is often said that a good play cannot be made out of a novel but I feel that the collaboration of an accomplished playwright and a novelist should result in a play better than the average. I go to the theatre a good deal, and am rarely satisfied because so often the characters in modern plays are thin shadows that have no existence off the stage. Now, a novelist's business is the creation of character in the round, and he can be a valuable help to a dramatist who had to spend much of his time learning the intricate technique of his job. Novel-writing is, of course, far easier than playwriting."

Thank you for a lovely time!

THE PHOENICIAN.

# *The* AMEN CORNER

We have lately been dazzled with the newspaper accounts of the great International Exhibition of Persian Art, which is being held at the Royal Academy in London. The King of England, the Shah of Persia, the Egyptian Government, and the Soviet Government have combined with many private owners to contribute to its unparalleled (so they say) magnificence and variety. The chairman is Sir Arnold Wilson, who has many claims to fame, not the least of which is that he has written a book which, as the *New York Herald Tribune* says, "is certainly one among the few genuinely great and lasting books of the war"—*Loyalties: Mesopotamia, 1914-1917. A Personal and Historical Record.*[1] He has also written a remarkable book called *The Persian Gulf*,[2] an historical sketch from the earliest times to the Twentieth Century, and a still more remarkable *Bibliography of Persia*,[3] which lists, as far as possible, every book and article ever written in any language on anything connected with Persia! If you want to make a real study of Persia, this is a book to have by you.

But in a world where life is short and books long, we have chosen to acquire our own introduction to that romantic country through a fascinating little book by Sir E. Denison Ross, the famous Orientalist, called, *The Persians*. It is a companion volume (though slenderer) to *The Sumerians*[4] by C. Leonard Woolley, and even more interesting. The book is, first, a survey of Persian history from the 6th century B. C. to the present day; secondly, a series of journeys "on paper" along the chief highways of Persia, with descriptions of the cities passed and the monuments seen; thirdly, a series of short sections on the various departments of Persian art—architecture, ceramics, carpets, painting—and a chapter on Persian literature. There are eighteen beautiful plates, some of them photographs of actual Persian scenes, others reproductions from Persian manuscripts.

The finest example of these wonderful manuscripts known in Western Europe is, we are told, an early 15th century manuscript belonging to the Royal Asiatic Society in London, of *The Shah-Nahmah of Firdausi*. The Shah-Namah is the great heroic classic of Persia, the book of the Persian Kings, in which are brought together the epic tales of the mythological past of Persia. The Oxonian has been looking at a book[5] which the Oxford University Press has just published about this manuscript which contains a series of miniature paintings surpassing, for richness of imagination and distinction of manner, anything we have lately viewed. 24 of these are reproduced, 7 in four colors and gold, and 17 in half tone. A commentary and description is provided by Mr. J. V. S. Wilkinson of the British Museum, and Laurence Binyon has written the Introduction. The Oxonian, who has lingered a good deal over Matthew Arnold, turned at once to "The Seven Courses of Rustam" and "The Story of Suhrab." They are, as you will have guessed, our old friends, Sohrab and Rustum.[6] From the Shah-Nahmah we learn the prelude to the story as told by Arnold. One of the most beautiful plates in a beautiful volume is the reproduction of The Meeting between Tahminah and Rustam. In color, in composition, and in feeling it is a real masterpiece. Sir E. Denison Ross refers constantly to the Shah-Nahmah (and reproduces an illustration from another manuscript) in the historical portion of *The Persians* as well as in the chapter on literature.

In this field, a more extended account is *Persian Literature*[7] by Reuben Levy. By way of illustration is *The Three Dervishes and Other Persian Tales*, in the *World's Classics*.[8] The same series contains the celebrated *Hajji Baba of Ispahan*, 1824, and *Hajji Baba of Ispahan in England*, 1828. On the history of the country there is *Persia*[9] by Sir Percy Sykes, a short and convenient account.

But we doubt whether you will be able to stop poring over Sir E. Denison Ross's chapter called "Journeys through Persia." If you are fortunate enough to be able to follow in his footsteps, prime yourself with *A Primer of Persian*[10] by G. S. A. Ranking, and don't let your *Persian Grammar*[11] out of your sight. And so you may fare safely from Tehran to Isfahan, from Bushire to Basra, and silken Samarkand!

THE OXONIAN.

Our Book of the Month: *The Persians*, by Sir E. Denison Ross. $2.

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